



VIRTUAL WORLD: CLOSE COMBAT MAGE

BOOK 01

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Virtual World: Close Combat Mage

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Synopsis

Due to a mistake on his student's part, a super Martial Artist had received a wrong class in an online game and had become a mage. He who was used to curbing violence with violence and using strength to subdue strength could only make the best out of his mistake. Taking on a new lease in life, he became a violent close combat mage. When strength and magic came perfectly together, a new gaming path had been opened by him!

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 1 - Teacher Gu Fei

The sky was gloomy in Yunduan City, and it drizzled from time to time.

Somewhere near the [spawn point](#) of new players within the city's Mage Academy, two [NPC](#) merchants were being surrounded by a dense crowd. One exclusively sold brooms, while the other sold only black-rimmed glasses. The Harry Potter series popularized the medieval concept of magic so much that even the latest [VRMMORPG](#) masterpiece, Parallel World, could not escape from its influence.

By adopting the standard character designs from Harry Potter, the two NPCs were able to rip off the new players twice. New players would receive 50 copper coins from the system at the start of the game. However, the two useless pieces of equipment were being sold at the price of 125 copper coins each, totaling to 250 copper coins together. Despite this, the interest of the players for the items did not diminish. They would arduously work for an entire day just for this sum. The entire Mage Academy was filled with players who were roaming about, dragging their long robes, with black-rimmed glasses on their faces and brooms in their hands.

In this lively atmosphere, there was one person in a bad mood.

Gu Fei, in his long mage robe, stood in the center of the academy grounds. He found nothing to do other than to sigh as he watched these energetic people.

Mage was the last job class he wanted.

And yet he just had to become a Mage.

This was all 'thanks' to a student called Ah Fa. Gu Fei was a school teacher. He had accidentally overheard a few students discussing about this new online game that utilized virtual reality.

When Gu Fei had inquired more about the game, Ah Fa gifted him a gaming account to get on his good side.

Who knew that matters would go wrong even when backed up by good intentions? Ah Fa carelessly gave Gu Fei an account that had already been set up with a name and job class. Gu Fei only noticed this fact after he had logged in and undergone a full-body scan, confirming his identity and other prerequisites for control. Because this was the first time that virtual reality technology was implemented for a MMORPG, it received unprecedented attention. The server could only handle so much at a time, so the developers resorted to limiting the distribution of accounts. Each person could only own a single account. That was why Gu Fei's only choice was to be a Mage if he wanted to continue playing the game.

Gu Fei felt like it was a pity to not play the game as he eyed the entire set of the latest VR equipment he had bought specially for the game. Hence, he had still ended up logging in to the game. It was just a shame that his desire to play the game was now greatly reduced since he could not choose his dream job class. Currently, he stood at the center of the academy with no idea on what he should be doing.

As he was zoning off, he suddenly noticed a few Mages retreating back into the academy through the main entrance. Their robes were ripped and they seemed to have been beaten black and blue. Gu Fei saw a short, skinny figure among them and yelled out involuntarily, "Ah Fa!"

That was the student. Poor in grades, bad at sports, a plain appearance – he had no desirable traits other than his silver tongue. He was a nobody that nobody liked in school. It was him who provided Gu Fei with his Mage account. Encountering him inside the game, Gu Fei prevented himself from charging and beating him up after much restraint, as Ah Fa's action was probably unintentional. Besides, he had to uphold his status of being a role model for others.

Ah Fa looked up and saw Gu Fei when he heard someone call him. He staggered toward Gu Fei and greeted, “Good day to you, sir!”

“Alright, enough. There’s no need to do that,” Gu Fei replied hurriedly. Being greeted by a student like that in a game was just too embarrassing. In fact, many players in the surroundings glanced at them out of curiosity after hearing Ah Fa’s greeting.

“What happened to you?” asked Gu Fei after dragging Ah Fa a little further away from the crowd.

Gasping for air, Ah Fa said, “Never – Never thought that this would happen to me... I got beaten up as soon as I started wandering around the city.”

“What’s your level right now?” Gu Fei was doubtful. He knew for a fact that there was nothing like a safe zone in the game besides the spawn point. However, the game still had a feature that prevented [PvP](#) among low-level players. It was impossible for any players to engage in PvP with those who were below level 5.

“I just spawned, so I haven’t even leveled up yet!” said Ah Fa.

“Then, how did the others PvP you?” Gu Fei could not understand.

“I didn’t get PvP-ed. I got beaten up,” said Ah Fa.

“Is there a difference?” Gu Fei was still puzzled.

“Sir, PvP uses in-game skills to reduce the HP of a player’s opponent. But we’re in a virtual reality game now. They just beat me up like in a regular street fight. Even though my HP remains the same, it still hurts a lot!” Ah Fa snarled as he rubbed the corner of his mouth.

“There’re even people like that in here?!”

“Yeah! I didn’t know before that this was possible in virtual reality,” said Ah Fa.

Virtual reality... Gu Fei thought. He blurted out, "Let me take a look at this!" He then suddenly began to make his way outside.

"Wait!" Ah Fa stopped Gu Fei, "Sir, you're a Mage as well. Your base Strength and physique are just no match for Knights! You can't win a fight like this!"

Gu Fei smacked Ah Fa's head and said, "Have you forgotten? Your teacher here knows kung fu!" He turned around and left with that.

"Sir!" Ah Fa stared blankly at the sight of Gu Fei leaving. "Teacher Gu Fei knows kung fu!" This was a running joke in Yulin Middle School. Apparently, even the principal laughed about this in private, "What's shameless? The fact that Teacher Gu Fei keeps insisting that he knows kung fu is the most shameless thing I've ever seen."

It was true that Gu Fei was a little better at jumping, a little faster than others, a little more agile with his movement, and a little stronger than others. This was perfectly reasonable to them as he was a P.E. teacher. Yet, Gu Fei insisted that he had been learning martial arts since he was a child, which, according to him, was how he obtained his body of steel. He even claimed that he had defeated countless individuals since young.

Nobody believed that, of course.

This was because of a video that circulated on the school network of Yulin Middle School. It originated from a security camera near the school entrance, probably uploaded by someone who had nothing better to do. It was footage of a young man being beaten black and blue by an old man as he cowered on the ground without putting up a fight. "OLD MAN RAILS YOUNG GUY" was the title of the video. The main focus of the video was undoubtedly the old man, and as for the other person? He was identified as teacher Gu Fei, the same one who proclaimed that he had "defeated countless individuals in the past."

Was there still anyone left who would believe that Gu Fei knew kung fu after an incident like this? Everyone just assumed that he had read too many wuxia novels, and that he had a few loose screws. Fortunately, Gu Fei had no violent tendencies even though he kept on insisting that he knew kung fu. He was also someone who seemed to take his job seriously, so nothing horrendous came out of it.

However, right now, Ah Fa was watching Gu Fei make his way out through the main entrance and turn his head to yell, “Which way?”

Ah Fa instinctively pointed to the right, and there went Gu Fei.

Ah Fa blanked out for a moment before snapping back to his senses. He chased after Gu Fei.

The game did an impressive job with the simulation undoubtedly. The pathway paved with stone was a little hard to walk on, but Gu Fei advanced at a fast pace. Ah Fa sweated profusely as he tried to catch up to Gu Fei. He saw Gu Fei stop at an intersection.

“Where are they?” Gu Fei turned over his head and asked as he saw Ah Fa catch up to him.

“They were there just now,” Ah Fa pointed at the fountain right in the center of the city square.

“No, sir, don’t go!” yelled Ah Fa when he saw Gu Fei walk off.

Gu Fei smiled back at him, “Don’t come. I’ll be right back.”

The back of someone in a mage robe always made players in-game feel that that player was weak; in contrast, Gu Fei’s back radiated with an unusual sense of strength and confidence.

Sh*t! It’s just another beating at most! Screw this! The real me won’t get hurt, anyway! Ah Fa thought to himself before giving Gu Fei another chase.

But Gu Fei was nowhere to be seen now. As Ah Fa looked around while he walked, he suddenly heard some miserable cries coming from an alley nearby. Ah Fa rushed there and stuck his head out to peek.

Inside the alley, four people in the light armor for Knights clutched a scrawny man as they pummeled him. Chilling sounds of punches striking flesh rang out. The person's nose was already broken while blood covered his face and body. It was difficult to determine his job class from what he was wearing. But even if he was a Warrior who possessed the toughest physique, he would not be able to resist the encirclement of four grown men, since he was just a regular person who seemed to have no fighting experience. As of this moment, he had already lost the will to fight back, wincing and faltering in pain as he was knocked into a corner.

The four people beating him up had ugly and threatening appearance. It was possible to tell that they were always up to no good from a single glance. Right now, they stopped beating the person as Gu Fei appeared in front of them.

No one said a thing for a moment. But when the four saw that Gu Fei was in a mage robe, they smiled at one another knowingly.

“Let him go!” said Gu Fei.

“You mean him?” The bulkiest of the four lifted his leg and stamped the poor guy again. He signaled the other three with a glance. The four inched forward to surround Gu Fei. They all tried to prevent Gu Fei from turning around and running away, yet he remained where he was, allowing the four men to encircle him.

A gleam of surprise flashed through the eyes of the bulky man, who was obviously this group of thugs' leader. But after eyeing Gu Fei closely, he felt a small degree of relief. From what he saw, the fellow before him was not tall. The fitting mage robe in the game did not hide his well-proportioned body; he was in possession of a wide chest, a thin waist, and long legs, making it apparent that he

was someone who usually paid attention to exercise. His body was in a fine condition, so he could obviously put up a good fight. However, they were bounded by the game's algorithm right now. No matter how great someone's body was in reality, speed, strength, and so on were all determined by the data of the game. He was a Mage, a job class with the weakest Strength and the overall physique. All it needed was a single punch before Gu Fei would end up screaming in pain for half of a day. As it seemed, he had forgotten about that fact that he was still in the game due to the well-simulated environment.

Without any speeches or taunting, the leader directly commanded, "Do it!"

Spawn point - is a location on a game map where a character spawns. Spawned or Respawned is the reforming or reappearance of a player somewhere in the game, usually after being killed.

NPC - stands for Non-player Character.

VRMMORPG - stands for Virtual Reality Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game.

PvP - originally means Player versus Player; the term 'PvP' is now loosely used in the gaming community as another word for duel or fight.

Chapter 2 - Kung Fu

Two people beside the leader rushed up, while another backed toward the alley's entrance to prevent Gu Fei from escaping.

The two arrived before Gu Fei in an instant and threw a punch and a kick, respectively. Gu Fei unhurriedly took a slight step back, completely dodging the attacks from both sides. Raising his left leg, he kicked the guy on his left right in the center of his face. But just as Gu Fei was about to unleash his other leg to the person to his right, the latter had already retreated to the side out of shock.

Gu Fei smiled wryly. He would be able to kick not just a single person if this were in reality. Right now, however, his speed was completely limited by the stats of a Mage's body in-game, preventing him from completing his move so that he had only used half of it. Furthermore, his power was greatly reduced; after being struck, the person on the left only covered his face, staring at Gu Fei in surprise. Were this in reality, taking a kick from Gu Fei to the face would knock him unconscious for at least four or five hours.

"He really does have some moves!" The leader's expression changed, but he did not become too flustered. Gu Fei's kick did connect, but his strength was clearly limited. He immediately hollered, "He's just a Mage! Nothing to be afraid of!" He rushed into the fray to join his group after shouting that.

Gu Fei moved about between the three people. Even though the Mage's physique severely limited his strength and overall build, he was still in possession of just enough agility; at least the disparity was not too evident under the situation that everyone was still new to the game and did not level up yet. Gu Fei would throw a punch or kick from time to time, making contact every time due to his rich fighting experience. On the other hand, the three struggled to even make contact with Gu Fei's clothes. The leader became more and more flabbergasted, This guy has got quite a few moves. If he

had a little more strength, the three of us would be knocked down long ago. Thankfully, he's just a Mage.

Gu Fei felt rather dejected right now. Many of his kung fu moves were being restrained by the various limitations of the game. In other words, even if he had chosen Fighter as his job class, he would have remained unable to utilize his kung fu skills properly – unless he assigned some of his stat points into Agility, Strength, etc. after leveling up. On the other hand, it meant that as long as he assigned some stat points into those, he had the chance to use his kung fu despite being a Mage. Gu Fei could not help but feel invigorated when he thought of this.

The three people around Gu Fei soon realized that they could not do anything to him. They also saw Gu Fei becoming more spirited the more he fought, even revealing an extremely satisfied smile, so they all became rattled inside.

In Gu Fei's eyes, these flashy, street-level techniques were filled with holes. Gu Fei had no intention to tangle with these people further, so he found an opportunity to back out from the encirclement. He laughed, "Still want to keep fighting?"

The three had suffered quite a number of punches and kicks from Gu Fei. Although the strength behind those was not staggering, it was still unpleasant as they were repeatedly struck mostly in the same spot by Gu Fei. At this moment, the villain on the left sported a blackened left eye, the villain on the right possessed a blackened right eye, and the leader in the middle had a bloody nose. Afraid that the blood would get into his mouth when he spoke, the leader raised his head and wiped away the blood with his hand. Following this action, he said to his three companions, "Let's go!"

"Wait!" Gu Fei said, "You plan to leave just like that without even apologizing?"

"Apologize?" the leader laughed, "You couldn't even beat me to death, so why should I apologize?"

True enough. After fighting for so long, Gu Fei could only give the three some black eyes and a nosebleed. The wounds were not unendurable and critical, and they were even more impossible to cause death. Death would only occur in the game if a person's HP hit nil. In the current situation, the three were all beaten black and blue, but their HP remained full. This was probably one of the game's larger bugs.

Gu Fei only chuckled faintly, bending down to pick up a rock. With a sudden stroke of his arm, the rock struck the leader's head with a thud.

The leader was greatly angered, "You...."

"How would you feel if I have struck your eye just now?" Gu Fei said calmly.

The leader was stunned. He initially thought Gu Fei had simply gotten lucky with that throw, but the tone of his voice suggested that he was capable of hitting whatever he wanted.

"Your eyes will of course be fine in reality, but it's the opposite inside the game... Don't forget, this is a virtual-reality game," Gu Fei admonished.

The leader retreated a few steps in fright, but he soon considered the plausibility of someone hitting his eyes just because the person said so. Was it possible for someone to be that capable? He became relieved inside and sneered, "Who are you trying to fool?"

Without a word, Gu Fei picked up a rock by flicking it up with his foot. With a wave of his right hand....

"Arghhhh!" With a sharp scream, the leader clutched his right eye as he collapsed to the ground. He rolled around as he cried out in pain nonstop. The pain of being hit directly inside the eye largely eclipsed being beaten to a blackened eye.

"You've still got one eye," Gu Fei said to the leader. With another flick of his foot, two more rocks flew up, which Gu Fei caught with

a wave of his arm. He swept his gaze past the other two people beside the leader, “I have two rocks in my hand this time.”

“Sor – Sorry!” The two quickly stammered out an apology, as they had been utterly frightened by the screams of their leader who continued to roll on the ground.

“Scram!” Gu Fei waved his hand, and the two hurriedly pulled their leader up from the ground. Clutching his right eye with his left eye shut tightly, the leader trembled from the pain. He stammered, “Let’s go... Carry me away quickly....” The two were momentarily stunned, before hastily leaving as they supported him. As for the person previously guarding the alley exit, he had already disappeared long ago.

Ah Fa was dumbfounded as he watched everything unfold from his hiding spot near the alley’s entrance. He only returned to his senses after the four people had completely disappeared. Rushing into the alley, he stared at Gu Fei in shock, “Sir, do you really know kung fu?”

“Of course, I’ve been practicing kung fu since young.” Gu Fei’s words were exactly the same as what he normally said back in school; even his tone and expression were hardly different.

Gu Fei really did know kung fu.

He was born into a family of kung fu practitioners, so he had been practicing kung fu since he was young. While his family all had their careers and professions externally, they all had one goal internally, and that was the propagation of Chinese martial art traditions. But despite that being the case, Gu Fei was aware that no one in the family took the matter to heart except for his father and him.

Unlike his father who had quite a selection of sparring partners since some of his uncles knew a couple of kung fu moves off the top of their heads, Gu Fei did not have one in his generation. Not only that, everyone else in his generation held contempt toward Gu Fei

who had zealously been practicing kung fu since young, “What century is this? The sky is filled with airplanes and the streets are filled with computers. Kung fu? Can you make a living with kung fu?”

Gu Fei wanted to prove them wrong, but it just led to even more derision.

There was no arguing against the truth. In this day and age, it really was very difficult to put food on the table through kung fu.

Gu Fei had even tried each and every area in the sporting world – the domain where the specialty of kung fu could be leveraged the easiest. However, there were some sports that resulted in repeat offenses for Gu Fei due to his failure to grasp the rules, such as kicking people above waist level in soccer and making illegal personal contact in basketball. There were also some other sports where kung fu gave him no advantage, like chess, and even some sports that fell under Gu Fei’s natural weaknesses, like swimming, diving and other water sports – Gu Fei could not swim.

Gu Fei could not manage in actual kung fu sporting events either.

The kung fu Gu Fei practiced focused on exercising the body and various fighting techniques. There were no advantages for him participating in performance-based martial arts categories. His father also explicitly forbade him from participating in events with full-contact fighting which he was best at.

“We practice martial arts to train ourselves, to break through the limits of the human body. It’s not for brawling!” his father said earnestly.

“Don’t we break through the limits of the human body to better defeat our opponents?” Gu Fei was puzzled.

“You’re wrong. The best way to defeat your opponent is to shoot them!” said his father.

“Shoot them?”

His father nodded solemnly, “That’s right. Shoot them!”

“But....”

Before Gu Fei could finish speaking, his father threw a fist. They were a family of kung fu practitioners; if words made no sense, talk with the fist! In the past, his father was still strong and healthy, and his kung fu was better than Gu Fei. Furthermore, Gu Fei obviously could not lay his hands on his father, which resulted in him taking a beating. That was also the same day that he went to Yulin Middle School for an interview....

All in all, after being eliminated from all sporting events, Gu Fei still managed to remain in the sporting world – if being a sports teacher counted.

With the footage of him taking a beating from his dad widely spread, he was labeled as shameless whenever he tried to tell people about his kung fu expertise.

Was it really that difficult for kung fu to survive in the current society? Gu Fei was overwhelmed by sorrow. Nowadays, he barely even participated in his family gatherings. Before, the older generation had still believed that Gu Fei was persevering with the propagation of kung fu. They had even considered him as a role model of the family; someone that the others of Gu Fei’s generation should look up to. But now, he was just a P.E. teacher while everyone else would show up to the family gathering in splendid clothes, indicating their successes in life. The older generation began to hesitate as a result, and no one believed anymore that Gu Fei was the most outstanding in his generation other than his father.

However, his father was even more adamant of his stance that “Kung fu is not to be used for brawling.”

“I will not allow you to harm anyone with kung fu!” his father said firmly.

“Not even bad people?” asked Gu Fei.

“Not even bad people!” His father was resolute, “Police are there for a reason! There are laws to punish them!”

“Then what is the use of kung fu?” Gu Fei was distressing. He hated how he could not understand everything like his father, caught in a dilemma over the purpose of kung fu.

Chapter 3 - Getting Started

One day in class, Gu Fei saw a glimmer of hope when he had overheard a discussion between a few male students about a particular upcoming MMORPG, Parallel World, implemented with virtual reality.

He knew exactly what the virtual reality technology would incorporate. Surely, he could unrestrainedly use kung fu in the game unlike in reality, right? With that in mind, Gu Fei went ahead and bought the entire set of virtual reality equipment on the exact same day he had heard the news. He also decided the job class he wanted: Fighter. The description 'A warrior who puts every part of his or her body to active use in combat' convinced Gu Fei that the job class was the most fitting for him.

Unfortunately, he had acquired the job class most vulnerable and least suited toward close combat due to Ah Fa's carelessness; he had become a Mage.

Gu Fei was utterly devastated at first. But after what he had just gone through, he realized something: The various job classes in-game only determined the usable skills. In Gu Fei's case, he already possessed the skill set for an entirely different job class; all he needed to do now was assign the stat points accordingly. His actual job class mattered not.

Although the stat-point distribution for a Fighter would definitely be more suitable for his kung fu use, it did not mean being a Mage was completely useless. He could just be a kung fu Mage!

A groan snapped Gu Fei out of his contemplation. The person in the corner struggled to get up.

"Sir!" Ah Fa was too timid to approach the person, so he just called Gu Fei's attention.

Gu Fei hurried over to the person in the corner and helped him up, “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine!” The person stood up and inhaled deeply. His face was still littered with bruises, but he exhibited a scholarly vibe. No wonder he was chosen to be beaten up. Gu Fei and Ah Fa supported the person to the fountain in the center of the city square, where he sat down. The person scooped up some water from the fountain to wash his face, becoming much more refreshed. He turned to Gu Fei and smiled, “Nice to meet you. I am Fleeting Smile.”

It was obviously an in-game name, so Gu Fei also introduced himself using the name Ah Fa had given his gaming account, “Thousand Miles Drunk.” Gu Fei slightly hated how he sounded like a drunkard with the name. The two shook hands; Fleeting Smile could tell with a single glance that Ah Fa was just a kid so he directly ignored him.

“This is the first time virtual reality was implemented for an MMORPG. We were prepared for unexpected situations, yet no one imagined that something like this would happen,” Fleeting Smile said as he rubbed his neck.

“Judging from what you've just said, you seem to be a GM?”

This caught Ah Fa’s attention. He could be considered as an experienced gamer after all. Just the term, GM or game moderator, hinted at the countless benefits that one could be provided in-game. GMs could do something as minor as disclose exclusive information or as major as assist players in obtaining extraordinary items directly. Players would condemn GMs who broke the codes of conduct in-game if they did not come across one, but it would be a different case once they did meet a GM. They would end up revering them like their father.

Looking at the sky, Fleeting Smile nodded, “Immediately after beta testing began today, we received reports of several groups of

players taking advantage of their stronger physique and job classes to beat up people with weaker job classes, like Mage. I entered the game to take a look myself. Never did I imagine I would suffer a beating as well.”

“How are you going to deal with this?” Gu Fei asked.

“Beats me,” said Fleeting Smile. “It’ll all depend on further developments from the tech department. There’re still quite a lot of problems in the game, so it is likely to take some time before the game can be launched officially with fees.”

Gu Fei and Ah Fa also raised their heads when they noticed how Fleeting Smile maintained his posture. Rain continued to drizzle down, damping their faces in no time. Is he still rinsing his face? Gu Fei pondered before lowering his head again.

“What are you two looking at?” Fleeting Smile surprisingly asked first.

“What are YOU looking at?” Ah Fa questioned in return.

“My nose won’t stop bleeding, boy!” said Fleeting Smile.

The two had no idea how to respond. After a long while, Fleeting Smile lowered his head and rubbed his nose. He said, “Alright, I’ll go check out some other places. What about you two?”

“I’m going to go grind for some levels!” said Gu Fei. He was extremely eager to find out whether the limited physique of a Mage would allow him to use kung fu after some stat points were assigned properly.

Ah Fa hesitated a bit before saying to Fleeting Smile, “I want to go with you.”

Fleeting Smile smiled, “Boy, I am a scrupulous gaming employee. Don’t expect to benefit in anything from me.”

With his little plot exposed, Ah Fa turned bright red. He said defensively, “I have no intentions of doing anything like that. I just

want to familiarize myself with the game by following you around.”

“Well, let’s go then!” He laughed wryly before turning to Gu Fei, “Do you want to come as well and familiarize yourself with the game?” He placed much emphasis on the word ‘familiarize’, making Ah Fa’s face even redder than before.

“It’s fine, just go your way,” Gu Fei waved at both of them.

Separating with the two, Gu Fei wasted no time and dashed out of Yunduan City toward where the monsters were.

The maps located near cities were always the ones with the lowest possible monster tier. Parallel World was no exception. Even the monsters lacked originality; they were all a bunch of kittens, puppies, and bunnies, gentle-looking and normally friendly with people. Because of the implementation of virtual reality, the animals all seemed ridiculously cute with their realistic appearances. These low-level monsters would not even fight back. At most, the pugs would just whimper in pain after being smacked by the players.

Gu Fei could not bear to continue after stomping a dog twice. The surrounding players were filled with hesitance as well. Some players who steeled their hearts also stopped involuntarily after receiving disdainful glares from the people around them. On the map, a large group of players looked at one another in dismay. They stood about idiotically, while the animals leaped around them enthusiastically. They would go up and rub themselves against the players’ legs affectionately.

“I can’t grind like this!” A male player let out a long sigh and threw his weapon on the ground.

“Yeah, this is impossible! They’re just too cute!” A female player put away her weapon and picked up a rabbit by her legs. She gave the rabbit a good nuzzle before angrily saying, “What’s the deal with this gaming company! Why did they make these monsters so

cute?!”

Everyone began to talk and voice their dissatisfaction toward the settings of the game. Gu Fei complained with some people beside him before leaving alone. Since he could not grind here, he could just go somewhere else. That was what Gu Fei decided.

To be frank, he had no interest in fighting animals. The kung fu that he had been training since young was intended to be used on human beings. There were never any lessons covering the vital parts of a dog that should be targeted. This did not mean that Gu Fei was inferior to a dog, but rather he found it demeaning to use the kung fu he was proud of on a dog, especially after so many years of hard work.

Strolling alongside the main road, the city behind him grew further and further away. An endless stretch of hills appeared in front of him. The cute animals were now nowhere to be seen. Making his way over a hill, Gu Fei came across a dip or basin – it was a steep slope – and at the bottom of it was a campfire burning brightly. A few foul-looking people huddled around the fire, dozing off from boredom.

With a single glance, Gu Fei could tell that they were not players but NPCs. After all, it was impossible for them to have the exact same appearance, stature, and attire even if they were sextuplets.

Human NPCs were precisely what Gu Fei was looking for.

They're monsters, right? Gu Fei thought as he inched toward the group.

The six NPCs seated around the fire should have been alerted and discovered Gu Fei at the hillside long ago. However, they only showed alarm after Gu Fei reached a certain distance from them. They leaped up hurriedly and cried out as they pointed at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei heard them saying, “Wow, here comes easy prey! Get him!”

Dialogues were displayed as words hovering above NPCs in other MMORPGs. Since this was a virtual-reality game, the dialogues had been programmed to be verbalized instead.

The six charged forward with the exact speed and movements in sync. Their positions to one another remained the same even after they had arrived before Gu Fei.

The NPC at the front cut to the chase and stabbed forward using a small knife for carving meat. Gu Fei dodged it and threw out a punch, landing a direct hit.

This was very different from his fight against the players in the city back then. Everyone was protected from PvP, so Gu Fei's opponents had suffered nothing but some pain from the virtual reality technology. Right now, however, a punch from him, a Mage with the weakest physical attack, immediately caused a slight damage against these monsters.

The NPC swayed a little after taking in Gu Fei's punch and stabbed out with his rusty knife. Gu Fei dodged the stab once more before launching another punch at the monster.

The NPCs surrounded Gu Fei but he maneuvered his way with ease, throwing fists and kicks at them from time to time. Gu Fei had no idea just what level they were, but his fight with them was much easier, as well as boring, than his fight with the four players back then.

Gu Fei felt slightly disappointed toward this VR game as it seemed that all it could offer was an extremely realistic environment right now. The monsters were still bounded by the same algorithm like in ordinary MMORPGs. The NPCs repetitive attack patterns were the same as fighting no one at all in Gu Fei's eyes. In addition, they could not dodge his attacks out of their accord. The NPCs' evasion speed and attack accuracy were purely dependent on their assigned stats.

It was just a matter of time before Gu Fei defeated them. He

began to strike the six evenly on purpose. After a few minutes of struggle, one finally roared out in grief and collapsed. The five remaining monsters soon followed suit when Gu Fei threw some more punches and kicks. Gu Fei's body flashed constantly after he did all this; these monsters of unknown levels had allowed him to level up six times.

Chapter 4 - Overhaul

Parallel World had five basic stats: Endurance, Strength, Agility, Intelligence, and Spirit. Five stat points were awarded for every level gained. Without any hesitation, Gu Fei poured all his stat points into Agility. A sense of elation filled his heart when he felt that he could now throw his punches and kicks much faster than before. Not only could he regain his usual capability if this continued, he could probably even reach speeds his real self could never attain, given that this was a game. Though, Gu Fei had no intentions of becoming a deviant like that; just reaching his real self's standard would do. Next, he planned to pour the rest of his stat points into Strength, so he could have the might he had in reality. He was just too weak right now. Gu Fei clenched his fist with all that in mind.

Speaking of MMORPGs, it was expected to loot the corpses of monsters after they were beaten. With his stat points distributed, Gu Fei began to search through the six bodies. He obtained two small carving knives and six money pouches after some time, each possessing a few dozen copper coins. It was impossible for monsters like these to be rich. Gu Fei stored all the coins into his money pouch. He lifted up his mage robe and slotted the two knives by his waist after scraping off the rust.

For the sake of realism, the game had no job restrictions with regard to equipment. Some only possessed stat requirements, mostly falling under Strength. Obviously, anyone could use basic weapons that had no stat requirements like these knives.

Putting everything away, Gu Fei turned and walked toward another hill.

There was another campfire with six NPCs ahead. However, before Gu Fei could even identify if they were similar to the six from before, the system issued an announcement. [Dear players, the game shall be disconnecting in ten seconds. Please be prepared

to go offline. 10, 9, 8....]

The game disconnected after the countdown ended. Gu Fei returned to reality as the virtual scene faded before his eyes.

What happened? Gu Fei muttered in his heart as he connected to the game's official website.

The developers and administrators of Parallel World currently sat together. They were holding an emergency meeting at night to discuss the various problems that the beta testing had revealed on its first day.

In order to maintain a certain level of mysteriousness for the world's first VRMMORPG, Parallel World had been developed in secrecy. It was only announced in closed beta where it generated hype. The internal testing was all done by staff; everyone mainly focused on the characters, quests, skills, equipment, and so on – all important aspects of a typical MMORPG. However, the first day of beta testing today had already uncovered several major issues, almost all of which were unacceptable because of the full-immersion experience that the virtual-reality technology provided.

First of all, the monsters in the beginner-level maps were just too adorable as mentioned by the players on the game's feedback channels. Players complained about this aspect the most. All the female players were absolutely dismayed by this; the male players also expressed dissatisfaction due to their fear of being despised by the opposite sex if they attacked the cute little monsters.

This issue could be technically fixed forcefully along with the repetitiveness and simplicity of the NPCs, structures, and landscapes in the game. The really troublesome problems were the ones caused by the players.

Incidents of violence occurred repeatedly in the half a day that the game was up, and the GMs were rather incapable of preventing them from happening. Since the immersion system formed the core of the virtual-reality game, these violent incidents challenged

the basic framework of the game and could not be solved through simple technical modifications. After repeated examination of the issue, they decided to include this type of bouts into the PvP setting and to further raise the PvP protection range to level 10. They could only wait and see if this sort of PvP would lead to situations where one hand casted skills while the other attempted a dirty sneak attack.

“This is good! Realistic, they say! Hah, virtual reality gaming needs to be realistic. This is exactly what we wanted,” said one of the top executives at the meeting in an attempt to comfort everyone.

However, the next problem was something truly immoral that could not be covered up using the excuse of 'realism' – the sexual assaults on female players.

Even the staff did not expect that the virtual technology would expose the darker side of gamers in such a thorough fashion. However, the company could not simply remove the sexual aspects of the game, since full immersion existed as a complete system. Moreover, the existence of sexualized content was actually Parallel World's hidden selling point, and the senior executives would not allow it to be removed completely.

Their final decision was to design a system that required the consent of both parties. It did end up stumping the technical department, however. Imagine a romantic environment where lovers were just about to take the next step together, and then a prompt box popped up with a ding. [Player X would like to invite you to have sex. Do you accept?] Even if they selected [Yes], the originally romantic atmosphere would deteriorate to a [No]...

In addition, how would they control the degree of the sexualized content? Would they control just the act itself? What about kissing then? And groping? When someone proposed the particular question in a hypothetical prompt box [Player X is ready to grope you. Do you accept?] everyone at the meeting facepalmed.

In the end, the big boss made a decision, “No matter the case, let’s create the system first. We can make necessary adjustments based on the players’ reactions and comments.”

The meeting ended after discussing a few other issues. All the game departments immediately threw themselves into the emergency work. The game would undergo a complete overhaul after being operational for just half a day. This was definitely a first in the history of the gaming world. Fortunately, they could use the excuse that they were inexperienced as this was the first time virtual reality technology had ever been implemented on such a scale. Nonetheless, they were under great pressure without a doubt.

The boss nodded his head with satisfaction as he watched everyone leave in a hurry. Only one person remained seated as he stared at the boss with a cheeky smile.

Only after all had left did the boss ask, “Xiaowu, do you have anything else to say?”

“Boss really does know me well!” The person called Xiaowu stood up and approached the boss, casually grabbing a seat nearby.

“Speak.” The boss gazed at him. Ye Xiaowu was a member of the R&D Department and among the core members of the overall production team.

“Yup! I saw something today that made me feel it would pose some problems in the game,” Xiaowu said.

“Oh?”

“Because the game is fully immersive, some people are able to bring the abilities of their occupation in reality into the game. With this natural advantage over the rest, it would be rather detrimental toward the notion of a balanced game that we are pursuing,” said Xiaowu.

“What sort of abilities can affect the game?” the boss asked.

“For example, kung fu!”

“Kung fu?”

Xiaowu nodded confidently, “Today, in the game, I met someone who simultaneously defeated three Knights with just his bare hands despite being a Mage. He must be a kung-fu practitioner in my opinion.”

“There’re really people like that?” the boss asked with a frown.

Xiaowu nodded, “Just think about it. Policemen, soldiers, martial artists, boxers, and so on – all these people could create an imbalance in the game!”

“Then, what do we do? We can’t possibly prevent people from playing the game just because of their occupation,” the boss asked.

“That can’t be helped,” Xiaowu shook his head.

The boss laughed instead, “If there’s no solution, you won’t stay behind to tell me all this.”

Xiaowu began to laugh as well, “It’s just that I got an epiphany from someone like that.”

“Go on.”

“In traditional MMOs, everything revolves around battle. But now that we have virtual reality, we should expand our scope of development and enhance the other systems besides the combat aspect. We can let those people with skills in life bring in their expertise as well. This way, there would be some sort of balance in the game at the very least,” Xiaowu said.

“Saying it is easy, but developing that idea is not,” the boss said.

“It’s worth trying!”

“Alright. Come up with a detailed plan and I’ll mention it in the next meeting,” the boss gave him the go-signal.

“Okay!” Xiaowu felt elated, “I’ll be leaving, then.”

“Wait!” the boss stopped him, “I say, why did you enter the game? Don’t you know the rules in the gaming industry? As a member of this company, you’re not allowed to enter our games. Some stricter companies don’t even let their relatives do so!”

“I’ve never agreed to that point. We made the games, so we obviously love the games. Why exactly should I lose my right to play? Don’t worry. I am a scrupulous gaming employee. In the game, I am just your average player,” Xiaowu said.

“Given your knowledge of the game, can you really stay as an average player?” the boss asked.

“Don’t worry. I won’t touch a single of those hidden parts,” Xiaowu promised.

“I’ll get someone to monitor you. What’s your in-game name?” the boss asked.

“Fleeting Smile,” Xiaowu smiled as he left the meeting room.

Chapter 5 - Fireball

A large-scale patching was carried out for the game, and the developers kept everyone updated with their progress on a daily basis. The issue of cute monsters was resolved on the very first day. The kittens, bunnies, and puppies were replaced completely with nasty-looking feral animals like boars and wolves.

The second day passed by...

And the third day went on....

Every player followed the updates eagerly. Even though the previous beta testing only went on for half a day, all had a gaming experience like nothing they had had before. The anticipation for the game was stronger than ever. Gu Fei was no exception. The first thing he did as soon as he got home every day was to check the latest developments regarding the patching. Gu Fei often found himself smiling as he woke up, since he had finally found a place where he could unleash his kung fu.

The wait for the game's reopening lasted for an entire month as there were simply too many things to patch. The idea from Xiaowu was given the green light, but refining every single aspect of it would have taken even more work. In the end, the gaming company decided to make the game playable first before gradually refining it further with future updates.

Gu Fei unfortunately had classes on the day the game went back up, so he logged into the game eagerly as soon as he got home after school. It had been quite a while since he felt so eager about something.

He was on a hill when he was disconnected before, yet he was now back to the spawn point inside the Mage Academy. Did he have to start all over again? Gu Fei checked his level and found no change; he remained at level 6. The coins from that day also remained with him, as well as the two small, rusty carving knives

that hung by his waist.

Looking around, he noticed other Mages gathering around a NPC in a long queue. Gu Fei lined up as well out of curiosity after confirming that it was neither of the NPCs that sold glasses and brooms.

“What’s going on here?” asked Gu Fei.

“Spells!” answered the person in the front as he glanced back at Gu Fei.

As it turned out, the patch had purposefully lowered the required level for learning skills and spells so that the players could fend for themselves as soon as possible. Players could learn a skill or a spell as soon as they entered the game, and they could learn more job-class-specific abilities for every six levels they reached. So besides buying glasses and brooms, the neophyte Mages of the academy had this to do as well.

The queue moved very fast, so it reached Gu Fei before he even knew it. He learned the first spell for Mages after speaking with the NPC. The spell was nothing original as Fireball was something that Mages seemed to learn first in every game all the time. However, as Gu Fei had reached level 6, he learned a second spell besides Fireball called Ring of Fire as well. If Fireball was the main offensive spell for new Mages, Ring of Fire would be the main defensive spell to protect the Mages’ fragile bodies.

But of course, the usage of spells was a little more special in a virtual-reality game.

In the center of the vast academy grounds, over a thousand players had gathered together, yelling out in unison, “Fireball!”

Fireballs formed swiftly in front of everyone. This created quite a spectacular sight as numerous fireballs floated mid-air. All the Mages were thrilled, but Gu Fei noticed a player beside him to be pale white. He seemed to be fairly shocked.

“Fire!” someone shouted out, and the rest immediately followed suit. The whole area echoed with sounds of “fire”. However, the Mage Academy was a safe zone, so offensive spells like Fireball was prohibited. When everyone had declared “Fire!” the fireballs remained suspended mid-air. The player beside Gu Fei grew even paler. Gu Fei could not help but ask, “Are you alright?”

“F*ck!” the guy swore. He asked for Gu Fei's in-game name and nonchalantly added him as a friend, “Look at my name.”

[System notification: Fireball added you as a friend.]

Gu Fei immediately broke into laughter. This person's name was Fireball. That would explain why he was startled when over a thousand players shouted the spell in unison.

As there were a constant number of people practicing casting their first spell, there was also a constant shouting of “Fireball!” The player called Fireball could no longer bear with it and decided to leave after bidding farewell to Gu Fei.

“He he he... It's noisy in here. I'll leave as well,” Gu Fei followed him.

The two left the Mage Academy and headed to a map outside Yunduan City. Along the way, Fireball grumbled to Gu Fei about his misery. As it turned out, he too had obtained the gaming account from another person, where the name and job class were already chosen. Gu Fei immediately felt sympathetic. Fireball did not actually mind it at first, but he began to feel a little annoyed with the name after his experience earlier. His focus would definitely be drastically affected when friends and enemies alike yelled “Fireball” in future battles. Right now, all he could hope for was that this beginner spell would soon be forgotten by all as they proceeded further in the game.

Gu Fei could not help but sympathize with Fireball, grumbling back at him about his tragic story of being forced to become a Mage. Not knowing the full story, Fireball assumed that Gu Fei just

disliked the Mage job class, so he started going on and on about the advantages of being a Mage.

In any case, Gu Fei formed a rather good impression of Fireball, as he was one of the few Mages who did not wear glasses or carry a broom.

They arrived outside the city in the blink of an eye as they conversed.

The results from the first patch were evident. The map outside the city was filled with feral wolves and boars, and by listening to the players' complaints, they were all hideous, encouraging everyone to eliminate these monsters from just a single glance. This greatly increased many players' desire to level up. All the maps outside the city were filled with people hunting the feral wolves and boars. Although the monsters looked tough and ferocious, they were actually very weak. They could only resist feebly under the assaults of the players. The spawn rate of the monsters did not match up to the demands, so dozens of players would encircle a monster as soon as it had spawned.

Fireball's blood began pumping as he watched on. He took a few steps forward and yelled, "Fireball!"

A fireball was formed slowly in front of him.

"Fire!" hollered Fireball.

And with that, the fireball was unleashed.

With a boom, the fireball landed accurately on a boar that was being pummeled by a group of players. The boar collapsed as flames splayed out with the aroma of barbecued meat.

"Nice!" Fireball clenched his fist, applauding himself for his accuracy in his first attack ever. However, the group of players who fought the boar all turned toward Fireball. The way they gazed at him was as if they were looking at something more loathsome than the boar.

“What’s up, everyone?” Fireball waved at them.

“Kill-stealing! How rude!” Fireball’s greeting was met with scorn.

“What? You mean this? Isn’t this just a normal battle?” Fireball was dumbfounded. There were clearly around a dozen players encircling the boar, so how was it considered kill-stealing when he attacked it? Didn’t the loot and EXP just belong to whoever killed the monster first?

“Are you blind? Can’t you tell we’re all from the same guild?” lamented one of them.

“Guild?” Fireball glanced at Gu Fei, puzzled. Gu Fei was dumbfounded as well. The game had just begun; who had the power to create a guild?

They all nodded together, and one of them shouted, “Do you still want to play the game after kill-stealing from the Heaven-Defying Guild?”

There was definitely no guild more oppressive than this one, but Fireball showed no fear as he faced the group of menacing, oppressive players. Gu Fei was rather surprised by this. Fireball stared at them straight in the eyes and stated calmly, “So what if I kill-steal? I’m only level 1! You can’t do anything to me!”

Gu Fei laughed at this. No wonder this guy was so dauntless! Gu Fei also knew about this change as he had followed the updates daily. It was something that directly targeted the incidents of violence that even he had personally experienced before. The PvP protection originally prevented players from being targeted by skills, so even if low-level players were hit, they would feel no pain. The current patch had also classified the players’ assault methods as a part of PvP, so if something similar to before happened again, it was impossible for Gu Fei to blind his opponent. Even if the rock struck the opponents accurately, they would feel no pain. Fireball ignored how threatening the other players were right now as he was protected by the system.

Still, these people possessed a defiant mentality since they even dared to call their guild “Heaven-Defying.” They showed no signs of backing down and charged up even as Fireball flaunted the fact that there was nothing they could do to him.

“What are you all doing? I’m level 1! Level 1! Level 1!” While Fireball repeatedly stressed his level, he was grabbed by his arms and legs and lifted into the air. One person yelled at the top of his lungs, “Tie him up onto that tree!” However, his suggestion was rejected promptly by someone else, “Just toss him into the river!”

The developers did not mention that the PvP protection covered a player being thrown into a river. Fireball became desperate and he struggled frantically. Everything seemed hopeless. Even if he was a Fighter and not a Mage, he would not be able to do anything about the situation. Hoisted high up in the air, Fireball was akin to an offering from an ancient tribe to their deity. Fireball looked around from above and as soon as he spotted Gu Fei, he shouted out, “Hey, you! What’s your name again? Save me!”

Gu Fei nodded and dashed swiftly toward the crowd. He blocked their way, “Why don’t we all calm down and talk over this? Let’s put the man down first.”

“Who the hell are you? Scram!” No one treated Gu Fei seriously after glancing briefly at him. The game had only been online for less than a day, so it was impossible for him to be able to repel so many people just by himself even if he was a professional player. Not to mention that the person was just as a Mage.

“He’s my friend. Now put me down!” Fireball continued to yell.

“A friend? Let’s toss him into the river as well!” A guy waved his arm and many people began to charge at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei was startled. Fireball was not the only one protected from PvP. These people clearly were nowhere close to level 10 as they were still hunting the low-level monsters just outside the city. Fights occurring under the protection of PvP were painless, so Gu

Fei would definitely be forcibly carried away with no way of escaping if he let them get close to him. Gu Fei hastily took a step forward and quickly leaped up. Turning and rotating his body, his left leg swept through the air from right to left, forming an arc.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The first three people were knocked down by Gu Fei's sweeping kick.

The three people stared at each other blankly after collapsing on the ground in a row. They were clueless as to what they should do. While it did not hurt, there was still the sensation of being attacked physically. It felt like someone had swept past their faces, but the force behind it was overwhelmingly strong. They found it to be even more perplexing than the paranormal-like absence of the pain they usually would have felt due to the recent game patch. The three of them sat on the ground stupidly, not even moving a muscle.

The others witnessed it much more clearly than the three. They were caught off guard by Gu Fei's clean sweeping kick.

"What skill is that?" the people asked one another.

"Do you have a skill like that?" someone asked a Mage in the guild.

"No, I don't. There's no such skill!"

"I don't have it either!" The group of people, comprised of different job classes, all looked through their skill sets, but no one found anything along the lines of Spinning Kick or Whirlwind Kick.

"Just what is his job class?" All began to doubt the mage robe they were looking at. This was a virtual reality game where equipment was not restricted by job classes, so it was probable for Gu Fei to be hiding his job class by wearing a mage robe.

"A hidden job class?" someone began to assume.

All had their eyes fixed on Gu Fei. Fireball had missed seeing Gu

Fei's kick as he was still hoisted in the air. All he felt was that the surroundings had grown quiet, and that the people carrying him seemed to have become statues, holding him steadily in the air.

“What're you lot doing? Put me down already!” Fireball bellowed.

His voice snapped all the people back to their senses, and they let go without even thinking twice. Fireball regained his freedom and fell flat on his face, managing to sneak in a “F*ck!”

Ignoring the others, Gu Fei walked through the crowd and pulled Fireball to his feet.

Everyone looked at one another helplessly, but no one dared to stop Gu Fei.

Chapter 6 - What a fast Mage!

"Where are we going?" Fireball could not help but ask as he saw that they were traveling further and further away from the beginner's maps outside Yunduan City.

"There's no way to grind levels there with so many people. I'll take you to another place," Gu Fei said.

"Where?" Fireball looked around. The rolling hills around them were obviously not the same terrain as outside the city. In the game, this meant that they had already arrived in a new map.

Gu Fei did not answer Fireball and instead brought him up a hill where he pointed toward a small pond at the bottom, "Look, there..." However, he could no longer find Fireball as he glanced back. Then he heard Fireball's voice coming from beside his foot, "D*mn! Get down quick! Don't you want to live anymore? They're going to see us." Fireball had already crouched down low on the ground. He stuck his head on the grass as he wormed his way backward while talking to Gu Fei in a hushed tone. It seemed extremely tiring.

"What're you doing?" Gu Fei found it both vexing and amusing.

"Those are Vagabonds! Do you know what level those mobs are? I would've stayed in the city and kill-steal from others if I've known that you're planning to bring me here!" He was only brave enough to raise his head and talk after creeping back half a meter.

"This is nothing. Just watch!" Gu Fei smiled, lifting his mage robe with one hand.

"What are you doing?!" Fireball was shocked, but he soon saw Gu Fei pull out a dagger from under his robe.

"Are you... a Thief?" Fireball was stunned.

"Fireball!" Gu Fei called out.

"Huh?" at the same instance Fireball answered reflexively, he saw a ball of fire appear in front of Gu Fei.

Equipment could not determine the identity of players, but skills and spells could not be faked at all. Gu Fei was indubitably a Mage.

"You're a Mage!" Fireball confirmed, "Then why do you have that dagger?"

"To fight monsters!" Gu Fei replied as he ran down the hillside.

"Hey, are you crazy?!" Fireball shouted before diving forward by half a meter once more. He raised his head and saw that Gu Fei was already halfway down the hill.

"Wow! What a fast Mage!" Fireball exclaimed. At this moment, Gu Fei had already entered the range of the six monsters. The six stood up and encircled Gu Fei.

"He's a goner! He's definitely dead meat. He's such a big noob!" Fireball muttered anxiously. The six monsters were definitely above Gu Fei's level. But even if they weren't, they were not the type of monsters that could be hunted arbitrarily by a single person since they possessed the ability to assist each other. Fireball dared not blink, as he felt that that was all the time it would take for Gu Fei to be reduced into a white streak of light.

But what happened next before Fireball's eyes was nothing short of a miracle. Gu Fei weaved gracefully among the six Vagabonds as the knife he was holding turned into a fast blur. The NPCs screamed as their blood splashed from time to time.

Fireball gasped as he froze in place. Just who was this person? He suppressed six monsters at around level 20 to the point where all their attacks missed. No, they did not seem to be all misses. Gu Fei had dodged them. What level was this person at? 40? 50? But the game had only been up for less than a day, so how was he able to be at such a high level? Even if he was at such a high level... could a Mage like himself charge up and engage these high-level monsters

face to face alone? Could he have a hidden account? A hidden job class? Or was he a legendary player that broke the game? As Fireball closely observed Gu Fei's kung fu, Gu Fei really did become doused in white light – the glow from leveling up. He had already defeated all six Vagabonds. Gu Fei's combat efficiency had significantly improved with his increase in agility as well as with the help of the small carving knife he had obtained.

Fireball stood up and ran toward Gu Fei with his arms flailing widely.

Gu Fei looted the monsters before making his way toward Fireball. He smiled calmly. In his eyes, killing these six rigidly programmed monsters was far too easy.

“Bro, what's your level now?” Fireball asked in admiration.

Gu Fei checked his stat window and answered, “Level 10.”

“What? 10?” Fireball sat back down on the ground again even though he had just gotten up. He pointed at the six monster corpses, “Do you know what their levels were?”

“I've checked the website. About level 20,” Gu Fei said.

“A level 10 Mage killing not just one but six level 20 Vagabonds!” Fireball exclaimed in disbelief despite having just witnessed it with his eyes.

“So what? I killed them because I could,” Gu Fei said nonchalantly.

Fireball gaped speechlessly at Gu Fei. How did he kill them then? Through his superb level of control of the game? But nothing could be done about the level of control in virtual reality.

“I know kung fu!” Gu Fei smiled.

“F*ck me, you can use kung fu in virtual reality?” Fireball whispered.

Before Gu Fei could even be bothered to reply, a shout rang out

from the other side of the hill, “Found them! They’re just ahead!”

The voice came from a person standing on the right hillside. He continued to point and gesture at the pair as he hollered.

Gu Fei and Fireball stood up and looked at the side of the hill. Players surged in from every direction in twos and threes toward them. There were at least a few dozens of people who had come.

“What’s going on?” Fireball looked around as he asked, “Is there a boss mob?” He looked around once more, but he found no other monsters other than the six corpses from before.

“They’re coming for us,” Gu Fei said.

“How do you know?” Fireball questioned.

“They radiate killing intent!” Gu Fei answered.

“Bro, you’ve got to be kidding me!” Fireball rolled his eyes.

Unfortunately, Gu Fei was right. The group of people slowly gathering at the bottom of the hill and closing in on the two of them radiated with aggression.

“Told you they were coming for us,” Gu Fei said as he pointed toward the person at the very front.

Fireball squinted his eyes. He recognized the person as the player whom he had a dispute a while ago. “Sh*t! Isn’t he that obnoxious person from before? What a waste of manpower,” Fireball complained, then shamelessly added, “I’m just level 1.”

“You see that pond over there?” Gu Fei pointed toward the foot of the hill.

Remembering that that person had wanted to throw him into a river previously, his face paled instantly. He prepared himself for the worst, “Is that pond deep?”

“No idea,” Gu Fei shook his head as the group finally arrived in front of them. Gu Fei had never considered fleeing from the start; Fireball self-assuredly stayed put either, thinking that he was just

level 1 and that the group could not harm him in any way. But now that he was reminded by Gu Fei about the previous river incident, Fireball began to have regrets for not having fled immediately.

Both parties were at loggerheads with each other. There were at least fifty or sixty people who spread out to surround the two. Gu Fei exhaled deeply. He was a kung fu practitioner not a superhuman being. Even if he possessed the means to beat all these people, he would still be restricted by the game's PvP system. However, whether their purpose was truly to start a fight was another story. He saw apprehension reflected in the eyes of some of them.

“What's the matter?” Gu Fei asked.

“Guild Leader, that's him,” said someone from the group as he pointed straight at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei immediately turned toward the one referred to as the guild leader. He was a person with average stature, lanky body, and straight-as-a-wire hair. His hair made his face appear longer and body lankier. His skin was coarse and pitted like the skin of an orange fruit. His small pair of eyes moved up and down on Gu Fei. Gu Fei believed him to be a Thief from the way he carried himself.

The person smiled after carefully examining Gu Fei, “Hello, I am Heaven-Defying Guild's leader.”

“Hello,” Gu Fei greeted back neutrally.

“We came to Parallel World from a game called Magic Domain,” the guild leader said.

Gu Fei nodded his head in acknowledgement. Being a young man himself, he of course knew some stuff about MMORPGs, especially about Magic Domain. He used to frequently hear people raving about the game. Before Parallel World appeared, Magic Domain was probably the most popular MMORPG around. In Gu Fei's school, the teachers highly regarded that game as a scourge, always

fearing that their students would become addicted to it.

But with the successful creation of the first virtual reality game, almost all the MMORPGs had met their end. Magic Domain in particular suffered an unprecedented drop in its number of online players ever since Parallel World's beta became public. The forums were filled with people selling their accounts to switch to Parallel World. Apparently, the game's creators were working themselves to death just to change Magic Domain into virtual reality. Regardless of their efforts, they could no longer have that honor of taking the first bite of the proverbial cake.

Fireball was more well-informed of this matter than Gu Fei. Having been a former player of Magic Domain, he had of course heard about the Heaven-Defying Guild. The guild was reputed for being fairly tyrannical in Magic Domain, even possessing quite a presence in the gaming world. This was especially true of the guild's leader, Sword Demon. Be it equipment, level, skills, or proficiency, he was always ahead of many. His mastery of the Magic Swordsman job class could also be considered as at the height of perfection. Nearly every Magic Domain player looked up to Sword Demon as their top idol. Even Fireball used to worship him back in those days. He had never imagined that they would meet like this. Staring at this unpleasant-looking youngster, Fireball could not help but ask, "Are you truly that Sword Demon?"

Sword Demon felt somewhat dissatisfied with Gu Fei's calm reaction; Fireball's response, on the other hand, felt much more gratifying. He nodded with fake modesty, "Yup, that's me!" His amiable reply, however, revealed his haughtiness.

"F*ck, why do you look like that? You're that Sword Demon? I think I've seen a real demon instead!" Fireball rattled off crassly, directly striking Sword Demon's sensitive spot.

Chapter 7 - The Dagger-Wielding Mage

Sword Demon had a glorious reputation back in Magic Domain. The Heaven-Defying Guild he had single-handedly founded was something many players flocked toward, wracking their heads to find a way in. When he had announced that he wanted to switch to Parallel World, everyone fervently answered that they would follow him and rebuild the guild only if he remained as their leader.

But who would have thought that everyone would retain their real appearance in the virtual reality game? The contrast between Sword Demon's overly plain appearance and his handsome player character in Magic Domain was just too shocking; the contrast was so great that a majority of the guild members refused to accept it. A large portion of them quickly expressed their desire to go solo. The female players who used to flock around him never appeared again after catching a glimpse of him from afar. In the end, only about fifty people out of the close to a thousand original guild members were willing to follow him.

Sword Demon was bitterly disappointed by the ugliness of human nature. However, as a top-class, once-glorious gamer, he was still someone who possessed abilities. Sword Demon had no intention of giving up. Deep down, he had firmly made up his mind to relive his former glory in Parallel World and let the name 'Heaven-Defying Guild' resound throughout the game.

Making himself stronger was obviously the first step toward achieving these goals. However, Sword Demon felt that he was at a disadvantage from the first day of beta testing. The term 'control' had lost its advantage in this highly simulated environment. In addition, his hands could only be regarded as godly if he was using a mouse and keyboard to play a game, but now they were basically useless. As a top gamer, he knew that he could only overcome this huge disadvantage by thoroughly researching the VR game's

mechanics. Fortunately for him, the game underwent a major overhaul just after half a day of beta testing. This provided him another opportunity to familiarize himself with the game's mechanism. For this purpose, he dedicated an entire month researching and studying every piece of information he could get his hands on about the game. He even practiced and memorized some fighting stances in real life to prepare for his clashes with the in-game characters. Hence, Sword Demon was brimming with confidence when he re-entered the game today.

In actual fact, he had already reached level 25 in less than a day. No ordinary person could ever fathom just how much hard work went into all that. Gaming, for him, was not just about playing for fun.

The best time to create a gap between levels was at the beginning of a game. Sword Demon would never miss such an opportunity. He did not waste his time by bringing his followers around as he had far exceeded their levels, so he was not among the people in the map outside the city. Only when Gu Fei had left with Fireball after knocking down the three guild members with a single sweep of his leg did Sword Demon's followers return to their senses and report back to him.

However, Sword Demon was very puzzled about the content of the report. He had thoroughly familiarized himself with all the skills for every level and job class in Parallel World. If he had to take a guess, Gu Fei's kick closely resembled the Swallow Counter skill of a Fighter. Such an advanced skill could only be obtained when one reached level 54; how was it possible for someone to know that skill right now? His followers had yet to reach level 10 as well, so how could an offensive skill be executed on them who were still under the PvP protection?

As a result, Sword Demon hastily returned from his previous map and traveled in the direction where the two had gone off to along with the rest of the guild. Sword Demon did not seek revenge

over a minor matter like kill-stealing a low-level monster. He only wanted to know how Gu Fei had managed to accomplish such a feat.

Unfortunately, Fireball's few words struck Sword Demon right in his sore spot. The easiest way to aggravate Sword Demon was to mention his poor looks, and Fireball had skillfully done just that. Sword Demon glared angrily at Fireball before asking Gu Fei, "What's your level now?"

"10," Gu Fei replied.

"Great!" Sword Demon nodded, "You two, up against me. How does that sound?"

"Sh*t man, I'm only level 1! Level 1! What's your level, anyway?" Fireball fired back indignantly.

Gu Fei added, "Yeah, he's only level 1. He can't engage in PvP."

Sword Demon smirked after hearing their words. He had no intention of fighting the two from the start. He had just issued the challenge so that the two would feel repentant. However, he did not expect Gu Fei to follow up his statement with, "So just myself will be enough."

Sword Demon's eyes widened, not quite believing what he had just heard, "What did you just say?"

"What? You wanted to PvP, right?" Gu Fei asked instead.

Sword Demon could no longer retract his earlier challenge after hearing Gu Fei's question. Obviously, not wanting to fight was not because he was afraid; he just felt that it's not worth it. Sword Demon considered his debut battle in Parallel World as too important to be wasted on a mere level 10 Mage.

But Sword Demon couldn't think of any good excuse to back down from a challenge he had proposed himself, so he could only swallow his regret and proceed with the fight, "Very well." As Sword Demon scanned his surroundings, he spotted a wide, empty

field next to the pond at the bottom of the hill. He pointed to it and asked, “How about we fight over there?” It was his first PvP in Parallel World after all; a wide space was just right for him to fully display his in-game skills.

Gu Fei was fine either way. He just nodded and headed toward the area.

Fireball swiftly followed behind and urgently whispered to Gu Fei, “Are you out of your mind? You’ve agreed to PvP without even knowing his level?”

“Nothing’s wrong with that. A fight is a fight,” Gu Fei laughed carelessly.

Gu Fei and Sword Demon faced off each other on the empty field by the pond. Sword Demon’s followers stood right behind him and they were all feeling very nervous. They all had faith in Sword Demon, which was why they continued to stick to him in the game. Could Sword Demon remain as glorious as before? The current battle might have had the answer to their question.

Standing behind Gu Fei, Fireball was lost in his thoughts. He carefully inspected every part of the pond and estimated its depth; he tried to find a corner where he could help himself out if he was ever thrown in. He felt that Gu Fei had no hope of winning the fight. Just who exactly was Gu Fei up against? It was that Sword Demon, a top gamer in the online gaming world. There was never an online game that he had set foot on where he had not emerged victorious. Magic Domain? That was just one of the highlights in his gaming career.

“Let’s begin!” Gu Fei said as he lifted his mage robe. He pulled a dagger out.

A dagger? Sword Demon was dumbfounded. This person was clearly a Mage!

A few skills in-game were unrestricted and available for all. They

could be learned after reaching the appropriate level and paying up regardless of the job class. Appraisal was one of those skills. This skill was not only for appraising equipment – the job classes and levels of monsters and players could be appraised as well.

Rich in gaming experience, Sword Demon learned the skill as soon as possible. He had already appraised Gu Fei and Fireball as soon as he came across them. The two were definitely Mages, one at level 10 and the other at level 1. Sword Demon's proficiency level over the skill was still not high enough, so he could not appraise their equipment. Therefore, he was quite taken aback when Gu Fei pulled a dagger out.

Just a noob, I see, Sword Demon shook his head, feeling rather disappointed. His first ever battle would actually be against a dagger-wielding Mage. There was nothing monumental about this fight at all.

Sword Demon casually pulled out a weapon from his waist as well – it was also a dagger! Sword Demon's job class was a Thief, an actual dagger-wielding expert.

“After you!” Sword Demon felt that it would be dishonorable of him if he attempted a first strike against a low-level opponent.

“Please!” Gu Fei held onto his dagger with a reverse-grip and clasped his fist. He bowed toward Sword Demon. Sword Demon was momentarily stunned by Gu Fei's gesture. By the time he recovered from his hesitation, Gu Fei had already shot forward and stabbed out.

So fast! Sword Demon was in shock. With his decent understanding of the game, Sword Demon could tell that Gu Fei had allocated all his stat points to Agility. Mage and Agility – recalling back to his previous online gaming experiences, there had been many instances where Mages focused solely on Agility. However, these players with high dodge rates or even absolute dodge rates required the support of extremely high level and

extraordinary equipment. It could be said that the results would only be apparent in the later stages of the game.

Also, players would only attempt stat point distributions like that only after the gaming algorithms had been fully understood. Parallel World was a new game, so everything was still being explored. Players were restricted to one account in the game as well, so deleting and starting all over again was impossible if the character was ruined from incorrect stat point distributions or from other reasons. As a result, Sword Demon had only allocated ten levels' worth of stat points even though he was already level 25. He could not risk distributing his other stat points before he identified a correct path of stat point allocation.

The agile Mage before him was an extremely reckless existence in Sword Demon's eyes.

Before his thrust was fully executed, Gu Fei saw Sword Demon move so he turned his hand and pursued. Gu Fei's reaction speed was unexpectedly fast.

However, Sword Demon's reflexes were not just for show either, considering how he had honed his fingers to a godly speed. He ducked down deftly and dodged the sweeping hand as well. However, he had never thought that Gu Fei's assault was still incomplete. Gu Fei followed through with the missed swing and twisted around, facing Sword Demon with his back. Gu Fei unleashed another jab by thrusting from under his armpit.

Sword Demon was still in a half-crouching position after dodging the dagger earlier. The dagger headed directly for Sword Demon's head as Gu Fei stabbed out. Without any more time to dodge, Sword Demon was reduced to any other person, instinctively holding his hands up to cover his face as if he was taking a beating. In the end, his dagger just happened to clash with Gu Fei's thrust. With a clank, Sword Demon borrowed the force to retreat by a few steps, pulling away from Gu Fei.

Both their hearts churned.

Gu Fei did not anticipate that his opponent would be capable of dodging all three attacks from him. These three attacks were not just any old moves from him.

Taisui – Liaowei – Yecha.

These were a set of dagger moves honed and refined by Gu Fei through his painstaking practice. Each of them was equally lethal. Of course, this was only made possible due to the game. Gu Fei would not execute these three moves so easily in reality. A little carelessness on his part could cost a life.

Gu Fei thought his assaults were flawless at first so he did not expect them to actually fail. The person in front of him had never learned martial arts before, but it was evident that he had rather fast reactions. Aside from that, he was also someone who focused on allocating his stat points to Agility. This was a very important aspect. Furthermore, due to the special traits of his job class, he was undoubtedly superior when it came to speed. Gu Fei realized another problem because of him – only a kung fu practitioner like him was capable of such great speed in real life, but everyone could possess the same speed, if not faster, in this game as long as the stat points were allocated accordingly.

Never would he have thought that he would be able to come across something impossible in real life within this game. Gu Fei was utterly delighted by this.

Chapter 8 - Sitting and Waiting

At this moment, Sword Demon's state of mind completely differed from Gu Fei's. The three strikes earlier left him breaking out in a cold sweat, especially with the last attack. He had covered himself purely out of reflex, which was why he somehow managed to block the blow.

The opponent was a Mage while he was a Thief. He should have been the one thinking of methods to approach the opponent, while Gu Fei should have been doing everything he could to maintain a distance and employ ranged skills to attack.

But now, it was actually the Mage who engaged the Thief with a dagger, with an end result of the Thief keeping his distance after receiving three attacks. No matter how experienced Sword Demon was, it was impossible for him to expect that he would come across a situation like this. He initially focused on the Mage's beginner spell, Fireball. Despite its low level, the damage it could cause if it landed was as substantial as a few strikes of his weapon. But in the end, Gu Fei did not even use magic and attacked with a dagger instead. This situation was far too absurd!

With both sides in a deadlock, neither of them dared to make the next move so easily.

Sword Demon quickly calculated his battle plan. Without a viable long-range attack skill, he needed to be in melee range if he intended to take down his opponent. But just the thought of closing in on Gu Fei had him in cold sweats.

"Fireball..." Gu Fei suddenly turned toward the crowd to speak, but a ball of fire quickly lit up before him.

Oh, no. He was so consumed by fear after witnessing Gu Fei's melee capabilities, Sword Demon had forgotten that he was ultimately a Mage. As soon as he saw the ball of fire form, Sword Demon began to move in a serpentine motion. He had seen the

Fireball spell in-game before. After firing, the ball of fire would only track the target within a small area for a brief period of time. The spell could be easily dodged as long as the target ran out of the range or avoided being hit.

Sword Demon zigzagged about crazily, waiting for Gu Fei to say the word “fire”. Unexpectedly, Gu Fei became momentarily stunned as he stared at the fireball in front of him. He muttered, “Not you. I was calling for that person Fireball.”

Pssshhhh. The first fireball was extinguished, but a second fireball was immediately lit. Sword Demon’s movement became even more erratic now. Gu Fei stood there with a fireball that was still not unleashed, completely at a loss. Eventually, the ball of fire fizzled out.

Sword Demon had to take precautions from afar against the Fireball spell, while he could not prevail in close combat either. How could he fight at this rate? He was helpless; the situation was unchangeable. He had thought that Gu Fei repeatedly ignited a fireball to limit his movements, so Sword Demon also used his class-exclusive skill before Gu Fei had the chance to rekindle his third fireball. Sword Demon’s body began to fade and blur like mist, before disappearing before everyone’s eyes.

"Stealth!" someone in the crowd shouted out.

It was obvious that Stealth was a trump card of the Thief job class, so it was hardly surprising. The real reason behind everyone’s shock was that the skill could only be learned upon reaching level 24. While they knew that Sword Demon’s level surpassed their own, no one had expected it to be so high. Everyone expected nothing less from a first-rate gamer in the world of online gaming. Even those who had become worried after witnessing Gu Fei’s three strikes began to feel more reassured.

Levels were the clearest indicator of strength in MMORPGs. With the stark disparity between level 24 and level 10, resistance was

futile!

Sword Demon completely disappeared from everyone's eyes. He hid somewhere on the field as he paid attention to Gu Fei's movements.

Sword Demon did not activate Stealth immediately when the fight began because of the Mage's level 6 spell, Ring of Fire.

A Thief would immediately be revealed if he attempted an attack or was hit by an attack when under Stealth. Although the damage from Ring of Fire was negligible, its area of effect extended a little bit further than a melee range. Thus, it was impossible for a Thief to approach a Mage silently when Ring of Fire was still active.

Of course, Ring of Fire had a weakness as well. It would only last for a certain amount of time after being casted and it was also limited by a cool-down time. The difference between the two times made it impossible for a Mage to ensure that his body was constantly cloaked in Ring of Fire. This difference in time was a good opportunity for a Thief to make a melee assault after approaching the opponent.

Sword Demon had extrapolated two possibilities for this fight based on his experiences. Beginner Mages would usually begin PvP by casting Ring of Fire, or they would have no clue that he was in possession of a Thief skill only obtainable at level 24. Therefore, he originally planned to approach Gu Fei and deal a fatal blow after Gu Fei's Ring of Fire had expired.

But now, it seemed that both the possibilities he came up with were wrong. Neither did Gu Fei use Ring of Fire nor was he surprised at Sword Demon's activation of Stealth. In addition, this Mage's melee ability was far scarier than his, something he would not have thought possible had he not experienced it himself.

Forced into such a disadvantageous situation, Sword Demon could only activate his Stealth skill first. He believed that Gu Fei would immediately cast his Ring of Fire in response to his use of

Stealth, and since his skill lasted three seconds longer than Ring of Fire, he was certain that he could use that time to finish the opponent as long as he stayed slightly outside the area of effect. There was the possibility that the Ring of Fire spell had been leveled up, allowing it to last longer than his Stealth, but this was basically impossible for a level 10 Mage with neither the time nor funds.

Using profound knowledge of the game and accurate deductions to formulate the best battle strategy – this was the style Sword Demon had adopted for MMORPGs. He was not one to completely underestimate an opponent, even if he was merely a level 10 Mage.

Unfortunately, he had made an error in his judgment once again.

Gu Fei had not casted his Ring of Fire spell, nor did he move about in an attempt to evade the unseen foe. He simply remained standing still.

Has he yet to learn Ring of Fire? Or is he really the noobiest of all noobs? Suspicion filled Sword Demon's heart, but this was an opportunity that could not be missed. He rapidly closed in on Gu Fei, as he tried to predict the possible choices Gu Fei might make.

Gu Fei did not move even a single muscle. Sword Demon even suspected that Gu Fei might not even be aware of the impending crisis unless he stood right in front of him and breathed.

Sword Demon came up behind him in an instant, yet Gu Fei still showed no reaction. Sword Demon readied the strongest Thief skill he currently possessed without further thought just before his Stealth state came to an end; it was the level 18 Thief skill, Backstab.

Just like its namesake, this skill could only be used from behind. Under normal circumstances, it would deal 40 damage + 200% attack. Although the people's gasps around them would alert Gu Fei of the cancellation of his Stealth skill in the instance he used the attack, Sword Demon's dagger would have pierced his heart by

then. An instant death was the only possible outcome for a Mage receiving Backstab from a Thief fifteen levels higher.

No one in the crowd understood what was happening, nor did anyone know that Sword Demon had already arrived behind Gu Fei.

At precisely this moment, Gu Fei abruptly turned around and extended his left hand swiftly. Everyone could not help but gasp in confusion. Sword Demon slowly appeared from the region of blank space. His right hand was outstretched with his dagger clasped tightly, but Gu Fei's left hand held his wrist firmly.

This scene was frozen in everyone's mind even as the battle erupted.

Gu Fei promptly twisted his left hand and applied pressure to Sword Demon's wrist. The spike of pain temporarily sapped the strength of Sword Demon's fingers, forcing him to let go of his dagger as it fell to the ground. Gu Fei took this chance to scoop out with his right hand, dropping his carving knife and catching the falling dagger instead. Together with his left hand, he brought Sword Demon's right arm against his back. Gu Fei lifted his left arm and stepped behind Sword Demon, placing the dagger close to his neck.

The series of moves Gu Fei executed displayed the full extent of his adroitness. Sword Demon had been completely subdued by the time everyone recovered from shock.

No one knew if it was threatening to have a blade pressed against the neck in this game. Regardless, everyone could easily determine the winner of this battle.

"Wow! Amazing!" Fireball exclaimed in admiration. Fear and anxiety had gripped his heart when he realized he would be the next target if Gu Fei was defeated, yet the outcome that unfolded before his eyes was both beautiful and spectacular. He rushed out from the crowd, incessantly clapping his hands in congratulation.

Patting Sword Demon on the back, he said, “Aren’t you level 24? How does it feel to be so thoroughly beaten by a level 10 Mage? Ha ha ha!” Fireball’s satisfaction made it seem like he was the one who had beaten Sword Demon.

Sword Demon’s face darkened. He had lost very convincingly. He was defeated despite being given the chance to perform a stealthy Backstab, so how could he still express discontent? Those were all the tricks a level 25 Thief like him could pull. Just who was this person? None of the techniques he used seemed to originate from any skills in the game!

Just because the match had a clear result did not mean that Sword Demon was happy about it. He felt a mixed bag of emotions at this moment. He had doubts toward Gu Fei’s skills but also felt the pain of his mediocrity. To think he was a top expert in the world of online games, yet here he had just lost pitifully to a Mage who was fifteen levels below him. Had he really become a thing of the past now?

Gu Fei suddenly released him as he was thinking about this. Sword Demon turned and took a few steps back. He looked at Gu Fei and asked, “What’s your name?”

“Thousand Miles Drunk,” Gu Fei replied.

“Excellent. I’ll be back!” said Sword Demon.

Gu Fei nodded with a slight smile. Sword Demon turned to leave, but Gu Fei suddenly called out, “Wait, your dagger.” He then tossed it toward Sword Demon.

Sword Demon caught it while feeling stunned. This dagger was called Frost Memories. Aside from its attack, it also boosted Agility by 25 points, possessed a 30% probability of dealing a Fatal Blow, and another 10% chance of inflicting Tier 3 freezing damage. Sword Demon obtained it serendipitously after killing a boss mob of unknown level while grinding monsters in a forest. There was not a single weapon on the official website that had stats which

surpassed it. Half of his remorse and disappointment of the loss came from the fact that this weapon had fallen into Gu Fei's possession.

Sword Demon could not believe Gu Fei would return it back to him at this moment. He held the weapon tightly in his hand. A huge amount of pay-to-win players had flooded MMORPGs nowadays. Weapons at such a grade could easily fetch a price equal to a few months of an average salaryman's wage. Was he clueless? Just what was going on?

He could not understand, nor did he know what to say. He could only nod and thank Gu Fei before leaving.

Chapter 9 - Method of the Pros

The Heaven-Defying Guild members were filled with much chagrin as they witnessed the utter defeat of their leader. They all glared scornfully at Gu Fei and Fireball before taking their leave.

Fireball showed no mercy by whistling and sneering at them now that the tides had changed. In his mind, the glorious online gaming expert that he used to look up to was now reduced to just a single word – Pftttttt!

“Drunk bro!” Fireball had already decided on his new idol as the Heaven-Defying Guild’s members left.

“How did you know he was behind you?” Fireball asked.

“Because of his killing intent,” Gu Fei laughed.

“Killing intent... Does something like that really exist?” Fireball asked softly.

“Of course,” Gu Fei nodded, “My ability at detecting killing intent is nowhere near perfect. My fourth uncle is the best at it. For instance, he can sleep very soundly when you make any noise near him, but he would wake up immediately as soon as you focus all your attention on him!”

“Do you really know wushu?!” Fireball said.

“It’s not wushu; it’s kung fu!” Gu Fei corrected.

“What’s the difference?”

“Wushu is for strengthening your body. Kung fu, on the other hand, is about vanquishing your enemies and protecting your homeland!” Gu Fei sighed as he said that. This was where his father’s viewpoint clashed with his. His father repeatedly insisted that they learned wushu, but Gu Fei felt that it was definitely kung fu.

“Protecting the homeland – is there still a need for that in the

current times?” Fireball said.

“No,” Gu Fei laughed, “Which is why I’m playing this game!”

“Oh... Can I learn it too?” Fireball had developed an interest.

“You’re...” Gu Fei hesitated.

“Am I too old for it?” Fireball was slightly disappointed as he was in his twenties already. Judging from the tropes of some wuxia novels, a protagonist at Fireball’s age would have long ago become a prominent figure in the Jianghu. If Fireball just started learning martial arts at his current age, all the ladies would have hooked up with others by the time he finished.

Surprisingly, Gu Fei shook his head, “Kung fu is intended to be learned after puberty, at least at the age of fifteen or sixteen. Your age is close to mine, so how can you be too old? It’s just that learning kung fu is very time-consuming. I think you’d need to spend at least eight to twelve hours every day. Do you have that much free time?”

“No,” Fireball replied without even thinking twice.

“Or you could use the time you spend in-game—”

“No no, that’s fine. I’ll not learn it. Let’s just continue with the game!” Fireball interrupted Gu Fei abruptly.

Gu Fei could only smile bitterly at this.

The six Vagabonds by the pond had respawned at the moment. Gu Fei was about to charge at the enemies after picking up the meat-carving knife that had been dropped during the battle when Fireball said from his side, “Drunk bro, the monsters here are too high-level. I’m not as skilled as you, so I’m gonna go to another map to grind.”

“I don’t mind you tagging along!” Gu Fei said.

“I am not here to tag along with others! I am here to play the game!” Fireball proclaimed firmly.

“Alright then, see you later!” Gu Fei laughed.

“Drunk bro, take it easy with all that grinding! Don’t leave me too far behind with the levels, okay?!” Fireball said while he ran and waved, “Let’s go for a drink later in the city if you’re still online.”

“Sure!” Gu Fei replied.

They both went their separate ways. Gu Fei continued grinding in the current map. He had a fantastic time during his battle with Sword Demon as it had been quite a while since he had the chance to engage in an intensive fight like that. Gu Fei relished the very instant when victory and defeat would be decided. Even though his previous opponent was rather amateurish in terms of combat, it would only be a matter of time before everyone would become competent with battle since Parallel Word was a game filled with simulations of real fights. That would be when the real fun started.

As for the monsters in front of him right now, Gu Fei made quick work of them. Artificial intelligence was just artificial intelligence in the end; their single-minded attacks with predictable patterns were completely useless against Gu Fei. There would be a day when all players figured out the attack patterns of every monster in this game. For instance, the person called Sword Demon from before would be capable of such. He would eventually become a formidable player with his brains and reflexes.

Gu Fei grinded for two whole hours near the pond at the bottom of the hill. In Gu Fei’s eyes, he was not fighting the monsters but actually honing his kung fu forms and routines. He enjoyed the feeling of sweat soaking his robe. He never found the repetitive kung fu moves to be dull either. The reason Gu Fei could persevere in practicing kung fu while his other family members gave up one by one was because he was filled with a genuine love for the martial art, hence never getting bored.

Gu Fei reached level 16 after dispatching six more Vagabonds. He

scooped up some water from the pond to wash his face. He felt really refreshed when the cold water splashed on his burning, sweaty face. Gu Fei was impressed from the bottom of his heart for the first time with the game's simulation. The sweaty feeling and the icy sensation from the cold water were simply fantastic.

Gu Fei received a message notification at this moment. He checked his inbox and as he expected, it was from Fireball, "Drunk bro, what's your current level?"

"I am level 16 right now," Gu Fei answered.

"Whaaaaat! So fast! I just reached level 10 myself," Gu Fei could feel how gloomy Fireball was just from his message. Fireball took two hours to reach level 10, and yet Gu Fei had reached the same level just by engaging in two battles near the pond. It seemed that challenging high-level monsters was an effective way to level up.

"Drunk bro, are you done yet? I saved up on some coins, so come back to the city and let me buy you a drink!" Fireball sent him another message.

"Okay!" Gu Fei replied and began to loot the six monsters he had defeated. He managed to obtain from them a small amount of coins, some pieces of vegetation of unknown uses, and a few more meat-carving knives. Gu Fei had already acquired more than ten of these knives and he had run out of places to store them.

Even though it was supposed to be completely realistic, the players still required an inventory system to store their items as this was still a game. A 'pocket' was the design for the inventory system in Parallel World. After picking up an item, a player only needed to put it inside the right-side pocket by his waist and that item would be stored in the inventory. It would never drop once stored inside. When a player wanted to retrieve an item, he just had to put his hand inside the pocket. The player would sense the neatly arranged boxes and by extending his hand in a box, the item within would naturally fall into his hand. A player could take any

item out by removing his hand carrying it from the pocket. It worked amazingly, just like Doraemon's dimensional pocket.

Gu Fei climbed up a hill after he finished sorting out his stuff. Looking around the vicinity, he tried to identify the way back to Yunduan City.

Gu Fei saw someone else by chance, grinding at another pond at the bottom of a hill. The person used Stealth to sneak behind a Vagabond, unleashed a Backstab upon it, before stabbing wildly at the encirclement of monsters around him. He would retreat hastily to regenerate after killing a monster, and repeat the same fighting strategy once his HP recovered.

The dagger in the person's hand shone with a faint blue light. Gu Fei smiled as he recognized the person as Sword Demon. Sword Demon's level seemed to be in the 20s, so it was suitable for him to grind here. However, the Vagabond monsters that moved in groups of six were rather inappropriate opponents for independent players. Aside from Gu Fei who possessed deviant prowess in physical combat, probably only a player like Sword Demon, who was an excellent tactician, could handle the fight.

Only three Vagabonds were left from the usual six that gathered around the campfire. When the fourth Vagabond spawned again, Sword Demon charged forward immediately and unleashed a sequence of moves: Stealth, approach the monster, Backstab, normal attacks, retreat, regenerate HP, wait for the respawn, and then repeat.

The way Sword Demon attacked was actually the same as Gu Fei's method – a specific and repetitive fighting pattern developed to counter the monsters' characteristics. Gu Fei could not help but feel impressed by him.

But in the ensuing moment, Gu Fei noticed that there was another person observing Sword Demon from a nearby hill.

The person was dressed in a form-fitting, purple robe, exhibiting

her body shape perfectly. She was clearly a female. It was difficult to get a good view of her face from the side. All Gu Fei could see was how she held onto her left arm with her right, and two of her fingers from her left arm tapped lightly on her lips. She closely observed Sword Demon below.

Gu Fei had never thought that even a woman could tell that he was something else. Gu Fei chuckled good-naturedly at this. Sword Demon had just retreated to his resting spot after finishing off a Vagabond. He seemed to notice that his inventory was full when he touched his pocket and let out a long sigh as he lifted his head high. He soon noticed the two people observing him from atop the hills. He turned around and left after a brief pause.

I wonder if he could recognize me from this distance, Gu Fei thought to himself, seeing as he had no special equipment on him that was striking like Sword Demon's Frost Memories.

He and the woman immediately went their way now that the target they observed was gone. Gu Fei snickered in his mind as he noticed that the lady was heading in the same direction as Sword Demon, Is Sword Demon getting an admirer? The gossip in him had awakened, but he gave up on going after them as he recalled Fireball was still waiting for him at the tavern in the city.

Chapter 10 - Particular Tastes

Gu Fei noticed on his way back that the number of players gradually increased the closer he got to Yunduan City. A majority of players had yet to focus on leveling; instead they were reveling in the wonders of full-immersion gaming. Even just holding hands with someone or patting a person's shoulder was a novel experience to them.

Gu Fei entered the city gate and headed toward the central square after asking Fireball where the tavern was located.

Three important structures, the tavern, auction house, and bank, were spread out around the square.

Gu Fei made his way over to the tavern and pushed open its door.

The place was not as dimly lit as Gu Fei had imagined; rather, the lighting had a natural glow that created a warm and cozy atmosphere. There were many players inside; most of them were boisterous and joyful. As for those who were supposedly drowning their sorrows in alcohol, they had not appeared just yet. The wooden racks behind the counter were filled with various alcohol bottles; the NPC bartender had a friendly attitude, serving and greeting every customer with a smile.

Gu Fei looked around, yet it was Fireball who found him first from the crowd. He called out from the table he was occupying, "Drunk bro, over here!"

"Hey, Fireball!" Gu Fei greeted back. With a whoosh, a fireball ignited right in front of him. The players around him were momentarily shocked, but they laughed in unison upon realizing what had happened.

"Hey, isn't that..." Gu Fei suddenly noticed someone familiar in the tavern.

Fireball turned to look before smiling, "Yeah that's Sword

Demon. He arrived not too long ago.”

“He took a detour, yet he had arrived before me!” Gu Fei said in surprise.

“What?” Fireball asked blankly.

“He was grinding at the same map as me before. I saw him,” Gu Fei explained.

“Oh... His level must be pretty high,” Fireball said as he poured Gu Fei some liquor. “Come on, Drunk bro. Try this alcohol. You must surely love alcohol with your name, right?”

Gu Fei grimaced, “Did you forget? My username was also given by someone else, just like yours.”

“Oh, right... I forgot!” Fireball smacked his forehead. “I wouldn’t have invited you for a drink if I had remembered. I’ve spent a whole silver coin for this!” Fireball lamented. A silver coin was equivalent to 100 copper coins. He could have bought one beginner weapon from the blacksmith in the early stages of the game with the money. Fireball must have spent quite some time killing monsters to accumulate that amount.

“No worries. My treat!” Gu Fei laughed. Since he fought monsters of a much higher level than Fireball, his income was naturally significantly higher as well.

Sword Demon had also noticed Gu Fei’s presence by now. Their eyes met and he nodded at Gu Fei, which could be considered as a form of greeting.

A huge racket pervaded the whole tavern.

Suddenly, the tavern door squeaked open. The whole place descended into silence. The remaining, scattered sounds all came from the people who had their backs to the door, including Gu Fei.

Gu Fei followed everyone’s lustful gazes and saw a lady.

The robe she wore was familiar, but Gu Fei was unsure if she was

the same woman he had seen back at the hillside. He saw plenty of similar outfits along the way back, which meant the robe was job-class-specific clothes.

Clothes in the game would automatically fit the form of a player. Thus, everyone's body shape could clearly be seen. The body of the lady was slender and svelte, curvy in the right areas with no apparent flaws; her whole body did not have a shadow of excess fat. With such a perfect figure, it was no wonder everyone in the tavern was dumbfounded.

Her looks were not as stunning in comparison. Still, she had a fairly comely face. Her eyes beheld a watery gaze that captivated people's hearts, and the delicate corners of her mouth formed a smile that made everyone feel a sense of warmth and closeness. With that dainty smile, the lady nodded slightly at everyone in the tavern.

The tavern patrons returned back to normal, breaking into a hubbub once more. The ogling looks from them at the lady were now replaced with an air of false sanctimony and disregard. They could only sneak in a few glances if they wanted to continue ogling.

The tavern was packed, so there were currently no tables available. Some tables had empty seats and the male players at these tables all revealed looks of excitement. However, no one was foolish enough to take the initiative and personally invite the lady over; whoever made the first move would suffer the wrath of the people. Even just being in temporary close proximity to the lady might have guaranteed being tied up and thrown into a river after leaving the establishment. To maintain peace, everyone waited patiently for the beautiful lady to make her choice.

Fireball was visibly excited as the lady walked over gently. He and Gu Fei sat at a table with four seats; this was an excellent arrangement since there were only the two of them there. He had never thought that the lady would only gaze past the two empty

seats before making her way past them.

Fireball's eagerness vanished right then, before sniffing in the end, "Wow. How fragrant."

"It's a game... How could there be perfume?" Gu Fei threw a withering look at him.

"It's body fragrance! The game simulated body fragrance!" Fireball insisted.

Gu Fei laughed. He could no longer be bothered insisting with him. By now, the lady had already made her way past a vast portion of the tavern, yet she had still not chosen a seat. She seemed like she was about to leave through the other door. Suddenly, she stopped right beside Sword Demon.

Sword Demon sat at a table with two seats, so there just happened to be a free seat since he was alone.

All held their breath, while many were stumped. The lady sure had very particular tastes! To think she would pick the person who was possibly the ugliest one out of all of them.

Although Sword Demon was an online gaming professional, he was still just an ordinary man. His heart surged a little when he saw the beautiful lady stop beside him. However, the lady did not take a seat and instead patted him on the back with her right hand.

The whole place fell silent again. Did they know each other? Everyone wanted to know the answer to this question. It was Beauty and the Beast! That was probably what a large number of them were thinking, while some had even thought it out as a case of 'a flower betwixt cow dung'.

Sword Demon was flattered, but he obviously knew he was not acquainted with the lady at all. Just as he was about to talk to her, the lady laughed and pointed at his feet, "You dropped your coin!"

Everyone, including Sword Demon, bent over and looked.

A shiny gold coin lay beside Sword Demon's foot.

"Oh, thanks!" Sword Demon bent over instinctively to pick it up, still pondering inside if this was a good excuse to share a drink with her.

"You're welcome," the lady replied, leaving toward the exit just as he picked up the gold coin. She smiled as she looked back at him before she left the establishment.

Sword Demon was in a daze. He held onto the gold coin with so much strength that he seemed to have mastered a kung fu technique.

"She has a good figure, beautiful looks, and even her voice is so pleasant! Ahhh! I think I'm in love with her," Fireball sighed, "Drunk bro, you—eh?" Fireball had waited until the lady left the tavern before turning to Gu Fei, yet he saw Gu Fei suddenly stand up and run out.

"You really are my idol!" Fireball stared at Gu Fei's back with a look of astonishment.

Gu Fei rushed out of the tavern and looked around. He caught a glimpse of the lady taking a right turn into an alley and immediately gave her the chase.

Sword Demon, you idiot! Gu Fei swore in his heart silently, Did you really fail to notice that the Frost Memories you left on the table had already been stolen as you played with the gold coin?

No one would have suspected a lady like that would do such a thing. Gu Fei would not have believed it either had he not seen it with his eyes.

It was far too despicable. Gu Fei gritted his teeth as this incident had made him recall a dark memory from his childhood.

When he practiced martial arts, every day was very demanding. Gu Fei had to follow a strict diet with minimal food. Whenever he was eating, his second uncle's jinx of a child who would always

come, “Hey, Xiao Fei, you dropped food on the ground again. You better pick it up, or else third uncle is going to beat you.”

“Oh!” the young Gu Fei hurriedly bent down to pick it up, but by the time he got back up again, his bowl of food had already been devoured by that child.

That was not the only time his cousin fooled him. All sorts of tricks, such as telling him that there were flying saucers, his father was looking for him, or even “Black Cat Detective” was on television, were used on him until Gu Fei finally developed a resistance toward schemes of misdirection. By the time he had learned to deal with the deceptions and violently beat up the cousin, the other had already become tired of eating Gu Fei’s meals and stopped playing tricks.

After so many years, Gu Fei would still feel a burning desire to serve justice whenever he thought of those incidents. Today, he was finally given a chance.

It was a pity the target was a lady. No matter what he did, he needed to have some discretion.

Gu Fei pondered as he turned into the alley. He ended up coming face to face with someone else.

The first thing he thought was, Oh. What a smell! He reacted afterward and hurriedly took a step back. The lady observed him with squinted eyes, “Why are you following me?”

“Return it to me!” Although his face flushed from that close contact just now, Gu Fei suppressed his sudden impulse to do it again and gave her a nasty look instead.

“Return what?” the lady asked innocently.

“Are you trying to play the fool? You just took that dagger from the tavern. Return the Frost Memories!” Gu Fei said.

The lady was stunned. She was not actually playing the fool; she just had not expected Gu Fei to be here, attempting to reclaim the

stolen weapon that was not his. She was rather confident in her beauty, so she thought he was some lustful person with nothing better to do than to flirt with her.

Chapter 11 - Flying Dagger

“Hand it over now!” Gu Fei extended his hand.

“On what grounds?” the lady shamelessly demanded.

Gu Fei frowned, Do I really have to give her the 'Stealing is wrong, and you shouldn't covet other's property' speech before she returns what she took? He was a school teacher after all, so he was used to giving such lectures. The lady opposite him looked to be about his age. Her smooth and practiced actions a while ago made Gu Fei suspect that she was a professional thief in reality. Was there any worth to talking about morals with this kind of person?

Since logic would surely not work on her, he decided to let his fists do the talking. Gu Fei's thoughts were heavily influenced by his father's teachings. Except for their different opinion about the purpose of learning kung fu, the two were very alike.

The lady's expression changed when she saw Gu Fei assume a battle posture, “What are you planning to do? Beat a woman like me? How despicable!”

“Give back the Frost Memories if you don't want to get hurt. Or else I can't guarantee the safety of your pretty face,” Gu Fei said.

The woman's face showed some fear. After considering for a while, she gritted her teeth and said, “Fine. I guess this just isn't my day. Here, take it.” She reached into her pocket and flung a dagger fiercely toward Gu Fei.

Gu Fei would not have the face to call himself a kung fu expert if a thrown dagger could easily hit him. He deftly caught the handle of the dagger that had been rudely flung at him. Gu Fei was about to question the lady more when he saw her turn around and flee fast.

I have a bad feeling about this! Gu Fei thought to himself as he

hurriedly checked what he was holding in his hand. It was not the Frost Memories! He had been duped! Gu Fei quickly gave chase.

Gu Fei thought he could easily catch up to the frail-looking woman with just a few steps. However, he soon realized just how wrong he was. Although everything in Parallel World was programmed to closely resemble reality, there were still things that it would not replicate; one of those was the physical differences between a man and a woman.

The so-called gender distinctions in the VR game were very similar to any MMORPGs – they were purely an aesthetic choice. In terms of in-game stats, everyone was given equal amount whether a player was a male or a female. This was even more the case after the issue of sexual assaults on women had occurred on the first day of beta testing. In order to promote sex equality and to tackle the problem, the game officials had made large modifications in Parallel World's settings. Now, one's job class was the deciding factor in a player's in-game life! If a male Mage wished to act upon his evil thoughts toward a female Warrior, he should be prepared for the consequences. It did not matter how high his level was, since sexually assaulting someone would have to be done in close proximity to each other. Even if he unleashed his strongest spell and overturned an entire map, he still would have to get close to his target to do the deed, right?

The issue between gender needs fixing, Gu Fei thought frustratedly.

The lady he was chasing was the perfect example. Only one word was apt to describe her running: fast.

Gu Fei poured every stat point he had gained in his sixteen levels to Agility, yet his speed was nothing compared to her who had a bonafide speed-based job class. She even had the leisure to make those silly faces at Gu Fei as she ran. The distance between the two was gradually lengthening.

Gu Fei felt enraged but could do nothing about it. The game lacked mechanics for accessing an individual's innate talent. Although players could utilize superhuman abilities based on stat point distribution, making sudden breakthroughs was impossible.

When the lady saw that Gu Fei's distance to her was far enough for her to shake him off completely, she purposely halted at a bend and ridiculed Gu Fei, "Hurry up and catch me, slow-poke! I'm about to disappear from your sight!"

"Stay there if you dare!" Gu Fei tried to use reverse psychology on her.

Many researchers claimed that women had an instinctive resistance to taunting and teasing. But Gu Fei's attempt was no better than throwing a stone into a vast sea; she completely ignored his words and even blew a kiss at him, "I had fun playing with you, Mage. Bye!"

As the lady was about to merrily head out of sight, Gu Fei fiercely said, "Go to hell!" He then hurled the dagger on his hand with enough force at her.

Speaking of throwing daggers, the most well-known figure for this skill was called Xiao Li Fei Dao.

To say his dagger's flight speed was fast was great, but what was really admirable about this expert was his target accuracy.

A unique skill of throwing daggers that had 100% accuracy, and even when used in an online game would be impossible to dodge.

Naturally, the speed was the reason behind its precision! It was so fast, so no one could dodge it.

Only a true expert could unleash the technique's full potential. Such experts' usual targets would be equally skilled individuals who could disappear from sight in a flash, so their techniques obviously required speed.

The lady might be fast on her feet but she neither had the ability

nor knowledge to deflect or dodge a flying dagger; the dagger's swift speed alone was enough to hit her.

Gu Fei was a person who could blind someone's eye with just a rock, so questioning his accuracy with a dagger was pointless.

Swish! The dagger flew out of his hand.

"Ahhh!" The dagger struck the lady's calf, causing her to collapse on the ground on all fours.

Gu Fei gleefully approached the lady at first, yet his feeling of schadenfreude quickly faded disappeared when he heard her painful cries.

It was truly difficult to watch a beauty cry. Gu Fei felt his actions were somewhat excessive especially when he saw the pool of blood soaking the ground.

Although no real damage had been inflicted on her real self, but the pain the dagger caused was still unbearable. Gu Fei reckoned he himself had never suffered such a deep wound.

"You... You're too much!" The lady remained sprawled on the ground bawling her eyes out as she pointed accusingly at Gu Fei. Gu Fei felt truly guilty now, but he reminded himself that she was a criminal. He had to treat her coldly. His face turned stern as he reached into his pocket, taking out his bundle of carving knives and threatened, "Mock me again and I'll stick all of these into your body."

The lady shut her mouth fast. After being struck once, she didn't doubt that Gu Fei was capable of doing what he had just threatened to do.

Actually, Gu Fei was merely scaring her. He already regretted hurting her once, so how could he bear to stab her again?

The lady lay sprawled on the ground; her hand putting pressure on her injured leg. No sound came from her mouth aside from her loud weeping.

Gu Fei moved to pull the dagger stuck on her leg out.

“Ahhh! What are you doing? You bast*rd!” Pain racked through her body when Gu Fei made accidental contact with the dagger wound, causing her to scold him boldly.

“I’m just trying to pull it out! It’s pretty hard to look at you with a knife on your leg,” Gu Fei reasoned.

“Won’t it hurt if you pull it out?” she asked sillily.

If this were in reality, as long as the knife did not stab a fatal part of the body and there was not much bleeding, there was no need to pull the knife out as it was basically not life threatening. Doing so might hasten blood loss instead. Perhaps pulling out the knife in the game would be fine? With such a thought, Gu Fei nodded his head toward her and said, “The pain will disappear once it’s removed.”

“Pull it out, then!” she said while gritting her teeth.

“Alright!” Gu Fei replied. He raised his hand and pulled the knife out without a warning.

“Ahhhh!” she screamed. The pain remained and the blood flowed unceasingly. It would appear that the game had replicated reality in this aspect as well.

“My HP is decreasing!” the lady suddenly said.

“Ay, that’s not good!” Gu Fei panicked, “Quick, hand me any cloth! Bandage will do as well. I have to dress your wound fast to stop the bleeding.”

Surprisingly, she actually gave him a bandage roll. Gu Fei stared at it in surprise for a minute before taking it. It was an in-game item called Bandage of Staunching. Tearing off a portion, he quickly helped her bandage her wound properly. Gu Fei didn’t know whether it was his wound-dressing skill or the in-game item’s effect that helped staunch the bleeding.

“Is your HP still dropping?” Gu Fei asked.

“Not anymore,” she answered.

“That was close!” Gu Fei sighed in relief. Had her HP dropped to 0, he would have no idea how to find her when she returned to a spawn point.

The lady’s scandalous crying turned into demure whimpering as her condition stabilized. She would occasionally glare at Gu Fei as she sobbed quietly. Gu Fei no longer felt as guilty as he did before and confidently extended his hand to ask the lady, “Okay, hand over the Frost Memories!”

Her pocket was within an arm’s reach yet Gu Fei was clear that even if he had reached in for the dagger, he would not find anything given how the in-game inventory system worked; only the owner had access to the stuff inside one’s pocket.

The lady no longer seemed to be in as much pain as before as she responded briskly, “Is it yours?”

“Uhhh... Nope!” Gu Fei said.

“Then why should I return it you?”

“It belongs to my friend!” Gu Fei said.

“Friend?” the lady chuckled, “If he is a friend, why were you not seated together with him in the bar? Don’t think I didn’t notice you. You and that lecherous guy on that table are definitely villains.”

Gu Fei recalled how Fireball’s eyes back then glowed with lust. Lecherous was a fitting word to describe him.

“You’re no better. You steal from others,” Gu Fei countered.

“I never said I am,” the lady admitted honestly.

“Just give me the dagger already!” Gu Fei insisted.

“No!”

“I’ll stab you again!” Gu Fei raised the dagger which he had just pulled out from her leg.

“If you want to, then stick it in!” She had that beguiling look and smile at the tavern once more.

This f*cking woman! To think she saw right through me! Gu Fei was frustrated. Despite the situation, he could not bring himself to knife her again.

“Actually, I know what’s your intention!” the lady said.

“What are you talking about?”

“Aren’t you that guy at the hillside earlier staring at what the owner of Frost Memories was holding?” she said.

It seemed that she really was the female player Gu Fei had seen back at the hillside. He now understood everything. She had been eyeing Sword Demon’s dagger from the very beginning, following him all the way to the tavern and easily stealing it under everyone's nose.

“This is a top grade rare weapon! Given the game’s soaring popularity, I am sure I could fetch a good price for it. Let’s split the profit fifty-fifty, alright? You don’t want me to return the dagger now, right?” the woman suggested.

“Hmph!” Gu Fei flared his nostrils as he treated her suggestion with disdain, “I don’t want money. I want to return that item to my friend. Don’t try to dirty my good intentions with your despicable mind.”

“Stop pretending to be the good guy. A real man should always stay true to his desires. You don’t even have half the guts I have,” she spat.

“I am being truthful,” Gu Fei said resolutely, “Give that item to me and I won’t make things difficult for you. You should seriously stop doing this sort of stuff.”

“Oh?” the woman’s eyes twinkled, “Are you saying you’re a genuinely good person?”

“Of course!”

“Alright then good guy... Could you bring me to where the Medic is? You’re not thinking that bandaging the knife wound will heal it just like that, right? Bring me there and I’ll give you what you want,” she said.

Chapter 12 - Where are you going

The lady met Gu Fei's eyes shamelessly.

But even though their eyes met, their thoughts were not the same.

Just as she was about to say something after watching Gu Fei maintained his silence for a while, he suddenly nodded his head, "Alright, I'll bring you over to the Medic."

She laughed as she stretched out her arms to Gu Fei, "Sorry to trouble you."

"No worries," Gu Fei laughed also as he held her arms and pulled her close to his body.

"Hey! You..." She was starting to suspect that Gu Fei might harbor ill intentions, but he just leaned his body down to rest her waist on his shoulder. He then hefted her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes and stood up.

"D*mn! How heavy!" Gu Fei couldn't help but blurt out these words as he balanced her on his shoulder. Truthfully, the lady was slim and would normally not weight much; the real issue here was him being a level 16 Mage who specialized in speed. His strength was exactly the same as when he first spawned. It was truly difficult for him to accomplish a physically demanding task like this.

Gu Fei sighed. If this were in reality, hoisting the lady on his one arm would be considered simple, not to mention carrying her properly.

While Gu Fei complained about her weight, she was not having a much better time either. The stomach was a very soft part of the body. People who had experienced having to support their full body weight on it would know just how uncomfortable she was feeling at this moment. Furthermore, she was being carried by a

Mage whose strength was clearly lacking; his unstable and shaky gait was truly worrying! However, she could only grit her teeth and silently bear with the situation since the Medic's place was quite far. She feared that if she complained, Gu Fei would say, "So you want to get down? Return Frost Memories to me first!" She was naturally unwilling to do so. Thus, she could only endure the discomfort without complaint to avoid angering him.

The lady's thoughts were actually not far from the truth. Gu Fei had intended to torment her for a while at first. Taking the nearest route? Nah. Let's take a detour instead!

But Gu Fei soon regretted this, as well as his shallow understanding of the game, as he had to squeeze his way through the crowded main road. Therefore, Gu Fei abandoned his original plan to take a detour and was now also eagerly trying to reach their destination fast.

The game had a job class that specialized in healing; it was called Priest.

First Aid was only a secondary in-game skill. The Medic NPC, which provided free first aid to beginner players, was situated not too far away from the Priest Academy. Since there were no available skills that could provide healing in the early stages and most players were poor, their only choice was to visit the Medic within the city if they had severe injuries.

The severe injuries in this case did not refer to the loss of HP while fighting. Bruises could easily be cured as long as the players left the combat zone and rested. Severe injuries, on the other hand, were much more serious, as even the players' maximum HP would be depleted. Resting would not help recover the loss HP back either. More importantly, severe injuries were unbearable because players would continue to feel pain unless they received proper treatment.

In fact, heavy injuries were so severe that the area around the

Medic was filled with agonized cries, as well as blood and tears.

No one paid attention to how Gu Fei swayed with a lady in tow to the Medic's place. It was very common for about half of the people who came for treatment to be carried here.

Gu Fei found a place to put her down after much difficulty. The people Gu Fei saw queuing here were much more than the ones buying glasses and brooms back in the Mage Academy. He looked back at the lady and said, "We're here. You can go line up. Just don't forget to hand over Frost Memories."

"There're so many people ogling me!" the lady winked flirtatiously. A beauty like her would indeed always draw people's attention wherever she went. Although the people here were in great pain and were hardly in the mood for dirty thoughts, distracting themselves from pain by appreciating a woman's beauty was an actual method that General Guan Yu used during the Three Warring Kingdoms' period. While it was not as gentlemanly as playing chess, beauty appreciation could also be considered as an art.

Gu Fei was not swayed in the slightest by her beauty. He said coolly with an open palm, "Give it back."

"People are really checking me out! Look around you!" Her voice grew louder as she anxiously gestured around with her hands. Even those who had not paid attention at first looked over after hearing her words.

The eyes of a group of five people flashed in recognition when they spotted the pair, and quickly made their way over. Finding a more agile and lively individuals than them in a place like this was not easy.

"It really is you!" The five quickened their pace as they got nearer. They had already closed in on the two with fury in their eyes before Gu Fei could make heads or tails of the situation.

Gu Fei did not recognize any of them, and they were not looking at him either. At the next moment, everyone was distracted by the lady's sudden movement. She grabbed onto Gu Fei's arm and shook it violently while saying, "Oops, they found us. Let's make a run for it!"

"Trying to escape?" The five quickly moved and surrounded the pair in an instant.

F*ck! Duped once more! Gu Fei immediately realized that these people must have swindled by her before as well. Because he was so caught up in exacting his revenge along the way, he had not realized he was being deceived and was now being treated as her accomplice.

"Let's not be too hasty. She and I are perfect strangers. I don't know her at all," Gu Fei quickly explained.

"Strangers? Then why is my dagger in your hand?" one of the guys demanded.

Dagger? Gu Fei wondered as he looked at what he was holding in his hand.

It was the dagger he had flung earlier, which the lady originally used to stab him with. It had remained in his hand after pulling it out of her leg.

This dagger... Gu Fei had not inspected it closely earlier since all he cared about was that it was not Frost Memories. His detailed inspection now of the dagger, Howling Rage, revealed that it had a higher damage output than Frost Memories. It could increase a player's attack speed and damage by 5% as well. Although it could not match Frost Memories, it was still considered a rare item by most beginners. Gu Fei finally understood the situation. While she was the one who had used some unknown method to steal Howling Rage from this person, he was the one currently holding it.

She had purposely shaken Gu Fei's arm earlier to let the others

see the dagger he was holding. She had to explicitly draw attention to it because the dagger was not as noticeable as Frost Memories.

It was really difficult to explain his way out now, especially after falling victim to such an impeccably calculated plan.

“Quick, let’s get out of here!” shouted the lady as she pulled Gu Fei closer to one of the guys as if the two intended to strong-arm him to flee.

This action created a two-against-one advantage for Gu Fei and the lady, so the four others hurriedly moved closer to that one guy to provide reinforcement. This in return freed the left and right sides of Gu Fei and the lady. She quickly let go of Gu Fei’s hand and headed to the right opening in an instant. She ran off without looking back as she yelled, “You take the left; I’ll take the right. We’ll meet back at our usual spot!”

Gu Fei grimaced. If she had just signaled him, he could have easily escaped as well since he was also someone who specialized in speed. But her shout was made to reinforce the ruse that they were partners in crime. He had become her scapegoat; it had nothing to do with splitting up and escaping. Her leg had long since healed based on how nimble her movements were. She clearly made up the excuse of visiting the Medic to trick Gu Fei into coming here before attracting her enemies’ attention in order to get him off her back. She had truly managed to deceive him this time.

She fled the healer’s compound and managed to lose the five people on her tail by using the back alleys around the city.

The lady sat down on the ground, as if she was momentarily overcome by fatigue. She lifted her leg and noticed that the bandage had thoroughly been soaked with the blood of the wound Gu Fei had inflicted on her. She cursed the game in her heart for making some portions very realistic while other areas were scarily defiant of the common sense. Stupid Mage. You actually called me heavy, the lady silently complained.

She took out a fresh roll of bandage from her pocket and applied it to her wound once more.

The item's healing effect would begin to work if the subject stayed still. This was nonetheless the lowest grade bandage; the more severe the injury, the longer it would take to heal the wound. Her injury was far from healed when she was at the Medic's compound, but seeing how rare and exquisite Frost Memories was, she felt it was worth it to bear the pain and make a run for it. The lady had not expected someone to find a dagger way better than Howling Rage so soon after the game launched. She needed to act fast since beginner items like this would only decrease in value the more time passed.

With that in mind, the lady leaned on the wall and got up as she began to limp toward her destination.

Trade Exchange.

Similar to the Auction House, a Trade Exchange post was where players could sell items. However, there were quite a few differences between the two trading places.

The Auction House allowed the players to set their prices for the items they were selling after being charged a set fee, allowing the system to sell said items in their place. Players could bid for an item during the allocated period, with the highest bidder receiving the item once the time expired.

As for Trade Exchange, its main appeal was that it allowed real world currency to be used for trading purposes.

With how online games had developed in the current day and age, virtual goods being sold for real world currency at appalling prices was nothing new. Many gaming companies did not object to this, yet the issue of security was a huge concern given the variety of ways these transactions could be accomplished. Parallel World's officials opted to provide real-time currency trading platforms for the players to use within the game as well. The computers

available within the various Trade Exchange platforms could be used to connect directly to the external network through the game's main servers, making it really convenient for buyers to use their online banking accounts to buy in-game goods.

The sellers, on the other hand, had to hand over the items to the Exhibition Hall first before they could set the prices and provide their bank account details. Once everything was accomplished, the information about the items would be posted on the game's official website.

Buyers could view information on an item from the site and even visit the Exhibition Hall to physically look at it. Once a purchase had been confirmed and the funds transferred to the designated system account, an item would become obtainable from the Exhibition Hall. The system would later transfer the money to the bank account provided by the seller.

The way trades were carried out in Parallel World was similar to most MMORPGs; however, the security and dependability of these transactions were far better when it was personally overseen by the gaming company.

The lady arrived at the trading lobby and passed Frost Memories over to the Exhibition Hall. She began to access the computer to input the required information. After entering her bank account details, she was now at the final step: Price.

As the game was still in open beta, the market prices for items had not been properly established yet. The lady could only gauge it in accordance to her gaming experience. Frost Memories was definitely a top tier weapon in the game thus far. Pay-to-win players should be willing to pay this much money for it. With such a thought, she typed the amount of fifty thousand dollars using the keyboard to the transaction page. She took a deep breath and was about to confirm the amount she had assigned when a hand shot out and hit the Esc key, canceling the operation menu.

A look of surprise overcame her. She turned around to find Gu Fei with a forced smile plastered on his face.

“You’re selling it for fifty thousand dollars?” Gu Fei asked with concern.

Chapter 13 - Return Back to Owner

“Oh, you’re here!” the lady smiled, her tender voice sounded as if she was greeting her husband returning from work.

Gu Fei was unfazed as he returned the smile, “You ran pretty fast!” He lowered his head and swept his gaze at her injured calf, before giving the wound a swift kick, “Your leg okay now?”

The lady felt immense pain, yet her face showed no traces of it. Just as she was about to reply, she heard Gu Fei mutter, “That’s not the bandage I placed!”

“You’re quite sharp!” she said carefully.

“Of course. How else could I not only keep up with you before, but even finding you here as well?” Gu Fei laughed.

The lady stared at Gu Fei without a word. No one knew what she was currently thinking about.

Gu Fei smugly continued, “Actually, you must have guessed that I would know your intention to trade the dagger here. Only you didn’t expect me to get here so fast, right?”

“Where are those guys?” the lady asked, obviously meaning the five people from the healer’s square.

“They’re gone!” Gu Fei said.

“Why would they just let you go?” she could not help but ask.

“Easy. I gave them that dagger,” Gu Fei said.

“They believed what you said after returning that dagger?” She felt that this was very unlikely.

“Nope! But since they couldn’t beat me, what else could they do?” Gu Fei retorted.

“They couldn’t beat you?” The lady’s face was colored with shock. She learned the Appraisal skill as well. She saw that Gu Fei

was a level 16 Mage. His level might be higher than most players, but that enraged, Howling Rage's owner was also within level 16. Furthermore, there were five of them, while he was just one.

Gu Fei laughed indifferently.

“Based on what you just said, you returned that dagger in a situation wherein they had no way of dealing with you.” If her expression from before was one of shock, her face now showed utter disbelief. While that dagger was nothing compared to Frost Memories, it was at least worth about thirty thousand dollars according to her calculations. To think that Gu Fei would let that easy money go. Could he really be not in it for the money?

“What exactly are you after?” she asked puzzled.

“I’ve told you many times. Return that dagger to me,” Gu Fei said.

The lady’s face still showed doubt.

“I know you won’t believe my words. So I brought him over....” Gu Fei pointed to his side as a figure stepped out from behind him. The person looked wretched, but his eyes, which were filled with killing intent, were trained at her. It was Sword Demon.

“Do you believe me now?” Gu Fei laughed, “You don’t need to give me that dagger anymore. Giving it to him directly will do. As for who is he, you two don’t need introductions, right?”

She looked at Sword Demon in surprise, before finally nodding her head, “Yes.”

She went back to the Exhibition Hall and canceled the transaction. She took Frost Memories and handed it over without missing a beat. However, she had actually handed it over to Gu Fei, not Sword Demon.

Gu Fei received it nonchalantly and passed it over to Sword Demon without another glance. Sword Demon revealed neither a nervous nor an insecure expression when Gu Fei took Frost

Memories from her; he just maintained his murderous eyes at her from start to finish.

The lady could imagine how angry he was, but this was the Trade Exchange. Out of all the safe zones in-game, the Trade Exchange platforms could be considered as the safest.

Thousands of players shouted “Fireball!” and balls of fire would ignite in the Mage Academy. Over here, when Gu Fei called out “Fireball”, only a reply was heard from a corner of the Exhibition Hall. The Fireball who was busily admiring the Mage equipment on display hastily made his way over.

“Don’t you have something you want to say to her?” Gu Fei asked Fireball.

Fireball nodded his head and looked at her, “Lady, what’s your name?”

“Xi Xiaotian,” her face was expressionless, “And you?” she asked back.

“I’m called Fireball,” he said happily.

Xi Xiaotian had no reaction; her eyes never left Gu Fei’s face.

Gu Fei knew her question was actually for him.

“Thousand Miles Drunk,” Gu Fei sighed. He disliked the name, but he could only bear with it.

“Your real name!” Xi Xiaotian said.

Gu Fei was momentarily stunned before he replied, “Gu Fei.”

Xi Xiaotian nodded her head and backed off. She leaned her back on the wall as she glided down using it to a sitting position.

She stared at Gu Fei as she cradled her injured leg, “Violent Fei!”

Gu Fei was startled but he quickly countered, “Cheater Tian!”

Sword Demon could not help but cough lightly at this weird atmosphere.

“Uhh, she’s just a woman. No need to make a fuss, right?” Gu Fei said to Sword Demon.

“Sure!” Sword Demon agreed without much thought.

Gu Fei laughed, “Since you have Frost Memories back, are you perhaps planning to grind levels now?”

Sword Demon revealed a rare smile since entering the Trade Exchange post, albeit a really ugly one, “I’m heading out. Ping me if there’s anything else!” He left without looking at any of them in the eye once he finished talking.

“F*ck, that’s cool! The way he acted just now is almost as cool as his past fame,” Fireball said, but he quickly added, “Except for his looks, that is.”

Gu Fei sighed, “I can’t argue with you on that.”

“What about us?” Fireball asked as he looked at Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian.

“I’m going to grind levels,” Gu Fei answered, “You?”

Fireball said nothing. His eyes looked at Xi Xiaotian up and down, yet she did not even send a look his way. Fireball was irked by this so he said, “I’ll go grind levels as well.”

“Then let’s go!” Gu Fei turned around and was about to leave.

“Hey!” Xi Xiaotian suddenly shouted.

Fireball spun around so fast that it seemed he was actually playing the game with a speed-based job class.

Xi Xiaotian still had her eyes on Gu Fei and did not bother to even glance at Fireball, “My leg!” She pointed to her calf.

Gu Fei noticed that the bandage was once again soaked in blood and walked closer, sighing as he said, “I can’t carry you. You’re really heavy.” He rubbed his right shoulder, the one he used to carry Xi Xiaotian a while ago, as he said this.

Xi Xiaotian glared at him angrily.

Sighing once more, Gu Fei reached out with his hand, “Bandage.”

She brought out a bandage roll as Gu Fei bent over and tore off the bandage strip covering her wound to begin re-applying a new one, “I say, why didn’t you use my wound-dressing method? Yours is really crudely done.”

Gu Fei soon finished dressing her wound and got up, “Done. I’m sure it won’t bleed again unless you abuse yourself, in which case I am not responsible.”

“I’m going!” Gu Fei waved to Xi Xiaotian as he and Fireball walked off. Just as he was about to exit the Trade Exchange post, Gu Fei received a system message. [Xi Xiaotian added you as a friend.]

That woman... She said her name is Xi Xiaotian and asked me for my real name. I guess that’s her real name? Everyone uses a fake name in games, yet this cheater actually dares to use her real one. Is she alright? Gu Fei silently muttered in his heart.

He did not immediately close his friends list after exiting the Trade Exchange platform.

“Thanks a lot! I wouldn’t have known that the game has a place like Trade Exchange without your help,” Gu Fei sent this message to his friend, Fleeting Smile.

“He he he! You found her there?” Fleeting Smile replied.

“Yup. The situation’s resolved,” Gu Fei said.

“Have you considered reporting her?” Fleeting Smile asked.

“This... Let’s just forget about it...” Gu Fei said.

“Protecting a scammer? Hmm... Is she a babe?” Fleeting Smile asked.

“She’s a head-turner,” Gu Fei admitted honestly.

Fleeting Smile replied, “A piece of advice; based on my past experiences, female players’ deception skills are scary but their hatred is even more so. You better watch out!”

“This game is big. I’m sure it would be hard to meet again,” Gu Fei said.

“Is that so?”

“Mmm... Maybe!” Gu Fei said frankly. Since she sent him a friend request, she might come look for him in the future.

“Let’s not talk about this anymore. I’m going to carry on grinding.”

“Leak some info about bosses, hidden quests, rare equipment, and such while we are at it,” Gu Fei said.

“Stop fooling around! I am a scrupulous gaming employee,” Fleeting Smile said.

Gu Fei was only casually joking; he naturally did not want any such game spoiler. He sent a smiley emoji and closed the chat window.

“Fireball! Ay, fu*k!” Just as Gu Fei said this, he immediately recalled that Fireball’s name was a taboo in public.

As a ball of fire emerged in front of Gu Fei, the Fireball beside him was thoroughly provoked, “Who are you cursing at?!”

“My bad,” Gu Fei said apologetically, “But your name’s really a pain in the a*s. Let’s think of a nickname for you.”

Fireball cursed the person who gave him his in-game account’s name for the hundred and eightieth time before responding to Gu Fei’s suggestion, “Call me Little Flame, then.”

“Little Flame... That’ll do!” Gu Fei said.

As the two headed to the city outskirts, Fireball suddenly remembered something, “Drunk bro....”

“Yeah?”

“Didn’t you say that that round of drinks back at the tavern was your treat? But since you ran off without a word, I was the one who paid for it in the end!” Fireball said.

“Is that so? Just put it on my tab. I’ll treat you next time for sure,” Gu Fei replied evasively.

“Why am I getting this vibe that you’re trying to rip me off?” Fireball’s awareness of danger was rather sharp.

“Why would I! Do you think I’m that sort of shameless person?” Gu Fei said.

“Originally, no. But now that you’ve said that, I’m beginning to suspect you,” Fireball worriedly said.

“I’m actually not someone who takes advantage of strangers,” Gu Fei laughed, “But when it comes to my friends, I’m the opposite!”

Chapter 14 - Unbelievable

In the blink of an eye, Parallel World's beta had already been up and running for an entire week. All the players strived to adapt to the changes brought by the new VR game. As a teacher, Gu Fei often heard conversations about the game everywhere in school. Gu Fei naturally could not join in these talks. Moreover, Gu Fei had originally requested Ah Fa not to tell anyone in school that he was playing the game.

In fact, teachers, just like their students, were interested in playing video games. However, they could only feign indifference toward their students' interests to maintain their image as paragons of learning. Unsurprisingly, Gu Fei also abided by this unspoken code of conduct for teachers despite only being a P.E. instructor.

Nevertheless, the students and his colleagues still noticed a distinct change in Gu Fei's behavior; for instance, he no longer constantly boasted about his kung fu skills to others.

In their minds, Gu Fei had finally become a normal person! This became quite a hot topic in school.

As for Gu Fei, he was more preoccupied with playing Parallel World whenever he had leisure time to be bothered by such gossips. He preferred spending his time in the virtual reality game where he could freely use kung fu.

Still, Gu Fei remained mindful of the fact that Parallel Word was a game; information was needed in games like it.

Gu Fei would look up relevant information on the game's official website whenever he gained a few levels to choose the next map to grind.

When Gu Fei chose the monsters to grind on, he had three strict requirements: They must have a humanoid form, engage in close

combat, and have a level higher than his.

A monster with humanoid form and melee attack was necessary to display his kung fu. After all, he was mainly playing the game for the sake of using his kung fu. So what others considered as a boring and mindless leveling method, Gu Fei viewed as a suitable martial arts training program. Hence, he would never find it tedious. Even if it required repeating a single action a thousand times, he would still devote his entire being into executing a move.

His choice to fight monsters higher than his level was a decision Gu Fei made in consideration of the game's mechanics. Every monster in Parallel World gave a fixed amount of experience – the higher the level, the larger the experience gained – so fighting higher level monsters meant his leveling speed was akin to taking an express train to level-town. Gu Fei had no reason to give up this leveling method, especially with his ability to take advantage of it. Yet, even with his extraordinary kung fu skills, there was still a limit to the monsters he could defeat. Gu Fei had no means by which he could break through the defenses of monsters twenty levels higher than him, even if his speed could keep up with their attacks.

Such a situation suddenly reminded Gu Fei of his father teaching him martial arts when he was young.

“Your attacks are weak and full of holes,” his father said with amusement when Gu Fei punched him. A fast palm strike from him had sent Gu Fei flat on the ground as he said, “Watch the way my shoulder moved. Have you understood why you couldn't avoid or block my palm strikes? Obviously, it's because my movement is much faster than your eyes. You need more practice.”

Gu Fei missed the joy of challenging himself time and time again in the past as he grew up. Therefore, he could hardly contain his excitement now that he had an opportunity to experience that sort of enjoyment again.

Continuously leveling to improve his skills and fighting even stronger opponents; everything was really simple in online games.

On this day, Gu Fei finally reached level 30.

Every player had the habit of checking the amount of experience needed to reach the next level upon leveling up; Gu Fei was no exception. However, he was taken aback once he had a look.

This isn't a mistake, right? Is this truly the amount of experience required to reach level 31 from level 30? Am I level 30 or level 300? Gu Fei muttered to himself.

The experience requirement that used to increase every level in 10% increments had risen by ten this time.

Ten times to be precise!

Prior to this, no one had ever heard of any MMORPGs that had such an abrupt huge leap in the amount of experience required to level up.

At this point in time, a majority of the players in Parallel World had rapidly ascended to level 30.

Each of them was equally dumbfounded at the sight of the experience points needed to reach level 31.

Everybody thought that it was a bug and incessantly reported it to the game company; almost no one carried on leveling.

The Parallel World's officials soon released a statement.

The algorithm was correct and not a bug. The issue actually originated from the company's adjustment of the experience cap to reach level 30.

This change was made in response to the alarming number of violent incidents that had happened on the first day of the game. Many players used their job classes' inherent physical advantage, as well as the initial imbalance of stats, to bully weaker players. The gaming company's inability to intervene in those incidents led

to Parallel World's setting adjustment to prevent such situations from occurring again.

After much deliberation, they decided to reduce largely the experience players needed to get to level 30.

This let the players reach level 30 quickly.

Level 30 was what the officials deemed as a stage where there would be a balance between the job classes. No matter the job class players held, this level was where they had enough power to protect themselves from others. The event where players could utilize their innate stronger physique to bully physically weaker players would never happen after reaching level 30. However, the game company could not be held liable if players were oppressed because of their poor gaming skills due to being complete noobs.

The statement effectively quelled the players' rage. Since many of them witnessed the terrible acts that had happened on that first day, they naturally did not oppose the game setting adjustment. The players immediately went back to the game to continue grinding once they realized that the modification was permanent.

But Gu Fei did not know anything about this.

After confirming that he was not at level 300 yet, he had simply blinked his eyes and resumed his level grinding without bothering to count how many zeros there were. He had originally intended to ask Fleeting Smile about it, but he gave up upon seeing on his friends list that he was not online.

I better focus on my kung fu training instead. The game company will naturally fix the issue if it's a mistake! was what Gu Fei thought. He followed the plan he had for level 30 and headed toward the map he had earlier decided on.

The map Gu Fei chose to grind at level 30 was where others would grind at level 40.

In fact, if he wanted to, he could even choose to fight monsters

with higher levels than 40. However, those monsters had more health and stronger defenses. In terms of times spent and amount of experience gained, it was much more efficient to fight level 40 monsters.

This was what Sword Demon told Gu Fei when they met coincidentally in a map for grinding. The method was very similar to how Gu Fei trained as well.

However, Sword Demon might have had a similar grinding technique to Gu Fei, but that was the extent of their similarity. For Sword Demon, leveling up was simply leveling up. As for Gu Fei, leveling up each time meant his kung fu had improved yet again. Gu Fei would not be this enthusiastic to grind if not for this.

Sword Demon had reached level 30 faster than everyone else and had gained experience comparable to mid level 30, but just like Gu Fei, he kept on grinding after slightly getting startled by the experience required for leveling up.

After exchanging a few words with Sword Demon, Gu Fei said, “I won’t bother you leveling,” and walked toward another area to grind monsters alone.

Neither proposed teaming up to level together.

Sword Demon’s leveling style was suited for soloing. Adding another person would simply reduce his grinding efficiency, even though the experience gained was larger with two people.

Gu Fei also understood that Sword Demon’s grinding method did not require a helper. Furthermore, he himself had a different purpose for fighting monsters. Gu Fei wanted to train his kung fu so he naturally did not want anyone supporting him from the side.

The two tacitly understood this and kept to their respective grinding spots.

Before splitting up, Gu Fei glanced admiringly at Sword Demon’s Frost Memories. Xi Xiaotian’s judgment was truly sinister; Frost

Memories' asking price of fifty thousand dollars was just right.

The dagger's most important feature was not its high damage output, its probability of causing fatality, or the chance of dealing frost effect; it was actually the 25-stat-point boost.

Players were only given 5 stat points every time they leveled up. Therefore, the dagger was equivalent to a player gaining five levels. The worth of Frost Memories' 25-stat-point boost was apparent in this game where leveling sped up more when one fought monsters with higher levels.

Even if it's not a weapon but just a stone I could sling by my waist, I would still be able to use it to head straight to maps five levels higher than my current grinding spot, Gu Fei thought to himself. Although he was envious, he did not regret helping Sword Demon get back his dagger when it got stolen. It was a matter of principle after all.

The two could not see each other as a row of small trees separated their grinding spots. All either could hear was the distant cries of the monsters. But while Sword Demon took the occasional pauses, Gu Fei grinded without stopping. This was proven by the incessant dying cries of the monsters by his side.

Sword Demon rested from time to time to recover his health. In Parallel World, HP recovery could not be induced through drinking medicine or similar stuff as long as the system tagged a player as attacking or under attack. Medicines could only help recover HP when one was not engaged in a fight. Official sources revealed that only certain special equipment or recovery skills could be used during combat.

Therefore, solo grinding in Parallel World could be considered as strenuous.

Gu Fei was indeed an exception. He was not using any skills except for a few basic kung fu moves, yet his leveling efficiency was still better. It was even better than the level 30 Thief, Sword

Demon, who was currently using his every skill to grind.

The gap in the experience earned between the two only existed because Gu Fei still had to work every day. He also spent a large chunk of his time in reality practicing kung fu, something Parallel World could not replace.

Gu Fei did not know how Sword Demon played the game, just that his username always appeared online whenever Gu Fei logged in. He thought of Sword Demon while grinding, He must be what everyone calls a professional gamer.

On the other side of the trees, Sword Demon was thinking about Gu Fei as well.

He thought of how Gu Fei got to level 30 in the few days since they last met.

Sword Demon considered reaching level 30 in a week a lousy feat.

However, Sword Demon had kept an eye on Gu Fei every day; he knew very well when Gu Fei would come online.

Sword Demon made a horrifying discovery when he totaled all of Gu Fei's gaming time: His efficiency was far beyond his level.

At the same time, he was very puzzled by Gu Fei's attire.

He was a level 30 Mage, yet he had not even replaced his beginner robe. Was his waist filled with daggers again? The straw hat on his head looked like what a Warrior would wear, while the shoes looked like a gear that a Thief would use!

Oh, man! What in the world was he?

Chapter 15 - Nine Blades of Tang

When Sword Demon first met Gu Fei, he was so shocked by his skills he had not thought of using Appraisal to inspect his equipment. Truth be told, Gu Fei's robe was the usual run-of-the-mill so there was no value in using Appraisal on it. Top tier items, like Frost Memories, had distinctive designs after all.

Sword Demon's curiosity grew as he continued to hear the endless cries of the monsters from the other side.

How exactly is he fighting the monsters? As a player familiar with the many in-game skills, Sword Demon could evaluate anyone's fighting style just from sound alone. Yet, he simply could not see through Gu Fei's methods.

Researching other players' techniques and skills was Sword Demon's passion, so he could no longer resist his curiosity and decided to scout Gu Fei's fight.

Sword Demon used the Stealth skill to creep in closer to his research target.

Skills in Parallel World were not easily executed once learned. Constant practice was required to raise their proficiency level, and the higher the proficiency level, the greater the effects of the skills. Repeated use, quest rewards, or stat option from equipment were some of the ways players could raise their skill proficiency level.

Stealth could be considered as the most important skill for the Thief job class. Experienced players like Sword Demon were very aware of its importance, so he had practiced it nonstop and managed to raise its proficiency level. The current Stealth Sword Demon used had no time limit and could be maintained as long as he did not get attacked or initiate an attack. The skill was definitely essential for sneak attacks.

Sword Demon who was under Stealth mode made his way across

the wall of trees and finally spotted Gu Fei.

There was no passing wind in the forest, yet Sword Demon still felt chilled to the bone. It was the type of coldness that originated from one's soul.

Gu Fei's way of fighting monsters completely went against everything Sword Demon had learned from his years of playing games.

The man in mage robe appeared as if he was one with the wind with his elegant and swift movements; the shabby straw hat covered half of his face. His hand moved in a flurry of motion with constant flashes of silver. These flashes were accompanied by the monsters' screams which persistently hung in the air. The silver flashes came from a blade Gu Fei was holding in his hand.

The blade looked similar to a real Tang sword with how it danced in Gu Fei's hand. Sword Demon could feel his gaming knowledge getting cleaved with every blow.

Gu Fei's strikes were very beautiful as they were executed perfectly.

But although the attacks were beautiful, they were not in-game skills but just regular moves!

Who would believe him if he said a Mage was defeating monsters and grinding much faster than him with just basic moves alone? Sword Demon was at a loss.

Sword Demon continued to carefully watch Gu Fei's fight. After a while, he discovered just how amazing Gu Fei's way of fighting the monsters was.

Every attack he dealt would inflict maximum damage!

Weapons in online games would often have a set range of value toward the application of damage. The difference between the minimum and maximum damage one could apply was significant. There had always been an ongoing argument if it was better to

have a weapon with a high but unstable damage output or to have a fixed, small range that averaged better. Many players concluded that they could only rely on luck to maximize their weapon's damage since it was still a mystery on how one could do it at will.

However, in the fully immersive online game, Parallel World, Sword Demon started to realize that low and high damage output was no longer dependent on luck, but rather something a player could have control of.

Based on Sword Demon's preliminary analysis, the damage applied was directly affected by the accuracy as well as the proficiency exerted behind each attack.

Gu Fei before him was like this.

Sword Demon was convinced that every attack Gu Fei made dealt maximum damage or at least close to it. Having spent quite a long time grinding his level here, he had a clear idea of how much health the monsters in this map had. Dividing that by the amount of cuts the blade landed, he easily figured out each strike's degree of damage. Taking into consideration the fact that he was a Mage, Sword Demon was still certain that Gu Fei's every blow had inflicted maximum damage.

Control! That was the word that drilled into Sword Demon's head.

Who said there was no control in a VR game? This was control, far beyond the usual MMORPGs' mouse or even keyboard control.

The ability to control your level of damage and inflict maximum damage at will... This could be considered as peak control! Sword Demon saw a whole new world opened up in front of his eyes and could not help but get excited.

At this moment, Gu Fei began to coordinate his movements, moving to cleave the monsters while deftly stepping backward to dodge.

Wait, does he even need to rest? Sword Demon wondered. He did not see Gu Fei receive any injury! Although the game had a fatigue setting, its design was just a hindrance to the player's gaming experience. It would be hard for players that only possessed an average human physique to continue playing when they had been utterly exhausted from the constant high-intensity fight.

While there was a fatigue gauge, it decreased rather slowly. Players dubbed it as the anti-addiction system. In a way, they were poking fun at the gaming company that tried to prevent people from playing the game regularly.

Could it be that the fatigue gauge actually decreases faster when you're using peak control? Sword Demon thought silently. If that really was the case, the drawbacks would somewhat outweigh the benefit. Fatigue recovery was slow and there was currently no way to speedily restore it except for waiting idly, although the time one was offline also counted as part of fatigue recovery. Sword Demon could not consider it worthwhile if that was indeed the case.

Regardless, Gu Fei was obviously attacking while retreating. The newly spawned monsters were not drawn over since he was out of the aggro range as he methodically eliminated the remaining monsters one by one. By the time he reached the edge of the forest, he had already cleanly sliced the last monster.

How wonderful! Sword Demon marveled quietly. Gu Fei had such a high level of precision that he was able to grasp a path of retreat flawlessly; it was the very definition of peak control.

However, the real wonder had yet to begin. After killing the last monster, Gu Fei held the blade with one hand and adjusted his straw hat. His eyes which had been covered by the straw hat were now unveiled as he gazed in Sword Demon's direction and laughed, "Is something the matter?"

Sword Demon turned around but saw no one behind him.

"Are you talking to me? You can see me?" asked Sword Demon as

shock colored his face.

“I can’t see you, but I can feel your presence,” Gu Fei said.

“How is that possible?!” Sword Demon was surprised, but he immediately recalled his failed Backstab that day when they PvP-ed. He thought Gu Fei became aware of the last attack and was able to grab him because Sword Demon had revealed himself prior to attacking.

Putting the two incidents together, could it be Gu Fei already knew he had been here under Stealth mode the whole time?

What is this? Is this still considered control? Sword Demon was at a loss.

“Reveal yourself already!” Gu Fei shouted. He knew Sword Demon was nearby, but he could not see him. Hearing his voice hanging in the air just made the situation too peculiar.

Sword Demon slowly emerged into sight as he released his Stealth.

“What’s up?” Gu Fei asked.

“I just wanted to see how you fight monsters,” Sword Demon said.

“So how was it?” Gu Fei asked with a smile.

“It’s great!” Sword Demon nodded.

“My Nine Blades of Tang.”

“Nine Blades of Tang?”

“Yup!” Gu Fei nodded.

What is that? Is that what he calls his peak control? If I recalled correctly there's a wuxia online game two years ago that had a similarly named low-level equipment... Sword Demon wept silently as he realized that his vast knowledge and experience was only limited to online games, mistaking the famous Tang sword for

some insignificant equipment.

“Three forms of Fenliu!” Gu Fei suddenly called out. With a twist of his wrist, he lifted the sword and delivered three cross slashes into the air.

“Three forms of Duanlang!” The momentum changed as he called out once more. Three fierce slashes were made before him, akin to an enraged tiger descending the mountain.

“Three forms of Chiri!” The blade cut the air before him, with three rapid strokes falling upon a single point with a shake of his arm.

“The Nine Blades of Tang allowed the user to flexibly slice, cut, and stab their targets. Getting anywhere near mastering it would require decades of diligent kung fu practice. How can my mediocre skill be a match?” Gu Fei laughed to himself.

Sword Demon could only nod his head obliviously. He simply had no idea what Gu Fei was talking about. In his eyes, the few strokes that Gu Fei had displayed messily in front of him was not nearly as amazing as him fighting the monsters from before.

“Oh, yeah. Do you have a reason why you’re looking for me?” Gu Fei asked.

There was actually something Sword Demon had undecidedly wanted to ask. But after seeing Gu Fei’s peak control, he finally decided to go for it, “I’ve got a friend who’s looking for a few people to form a mercenary group, and I’m wondering if you’re interested?”

“Mercenary group?”

“You know what that is?”

“Of course, I do.” There was no way Gu Fei, who was concerned with all aspects of this game, would not know the two major organizational features that existed in-game.

Guilds and mercenary groups.

Guilds were much like gangs in the usual online games. In Parallel World, a guild could be formed through a person's nomination and twenty individuals' agreement.

Meanwhile, mercenary groups were a new feature very different from the traditional type found in most online games. Since there was no required amount of players to establish a mercenary team, even a single player could form one. The mercenary quests given by the system allowed the members to earn money, gain experience, or be rewarded with equipment. Similarly, players and guilds could also release missions for mercenary groups by providing remuneration; by completing a quest, the mercenaries would then be able to acquire the previously agreed upon reward. Naturally, players and guilds could not provide experience as rewards, so many would usually provide equipment, gold, etc. as payment.

Guilds and mercenary groups never clashed with each other. Even if the players were from different guilds, they could still form a mercenary group together. Though, the current trend was for the same guild members to form a mercenary group. While it was possible to have a one-man mercenary group, the quests given by the system were usually impossible to be completed solo. Lone wolves might as well just wait for simple quests made by other players! Therefore, one of the most popular things to do in the game right now was for guilds to groom their mercenary groups.

Gu Fei momentarily laughed and said, "Oh, you want me to join the Heaven-Defying Guild's mercenary group?"

Sword Demon laughed bitterly, "Heaven-Defying Guild had already been disbanded."

"Ack! Why?" Gu Fei was perplexed. Guilds could only be established by level 30 players, while only those above level 20 could second the establishment. Since Sword Demon had already

reached level 30, Gu Fei had thought his Heaven-Defying Guild would have long been established.

Chapter 16 - Meeting at Ray's Bar (Part 1)

Gu Fei's question made Sword Demon feel extremely aggrieved.

Why? It's because of Gu Fei himself! He had caused his downfall. No one believed Sword Demon had the strength to lead, especially after a level 25 Thief like him lost to a mere level 10 Mage. Even though he was a pro player, the fact that he was defeated by a Mage fifteen levels below him made it impossible for him to win others' trust by leveraging his past reputation and high level in-game. Therefore, it was no surprise that Sword Demon found himself being abandoned by his meager followers in less than two days, even breaking ties and friendships with him for good.

However, Sword Demon bore no grudges against Gu Fei, as he considered himself to have lost in that fight fair and square. It was only because Gu Fei had asked the question thoughtlessly that Sword Demon felt somewhat upset.

"Ahem. Don't worry about that! Let's talk about this mercenary group instead. Are you interested?" Sword Demon asked.

"Well, I've got nothing important going on at the moment, so I don't mind taking a look," Gu Fei said. Truthfully, he had no wish to take part in this sort of group activity. But after seeing the look on Sword Demon's face, and adding Fireball's tidbit about the situation Sword Demon had found himself a couple of days ago, he had an inkling of what had happened to this person's guild. If that was truly the case, then he felt somewhat guilty for having caused it.

If Gu Fei had known that this would happen from the beginning, he would have allowed Sword Demon to unleash a few moves first before hinting to him about the gap between their fighting prowess and would not have aggressively went for the win. With Sword Demon's personality, he would definitely not pursue the matter or make things difficult for Gu Fei or Fireball any further.

Gu Fei knew clearly how it felt to be ostracized by others. It was worse in Sword Demon's case, since it was a matter of appearance. Reality was truly cruel! Plenty of people judged others based on their looks; it was a good thing Gu Fei himself hadn't been born that ugly. It was a very human reaction, however, to sympathize with others while counting their blessings.

This mixture of guilt, understanding, and sympathy made Gu Fei feel that the least he could do was sacrifice a bit of his alone time and fulfill Sword Demon's request as a form of compensation.

On the other hand, Sword Demon did not think Gu Fei's response was such a huge favor. He merely nodded his head upon seeing Gu Fei's acquiescence, "Great! Let's meet later this afternoon. We'll go together."

"Afternoon? At what time?" Gu Fei asked.

"2 p.m.!" Sword Demon said.

"Got it," Gu Fei affirmed.

"See you later, then!" Sword Demon nodded once more as he re-entered the forest and returned to his grinding spot.

Gu Fei stretched his neck and loosened up his shoulders before diving back into the monsters while brandishing his sword.

At 1:50 p.m., Sword Demon sent him a message, "Where are you now?"

"I'm on my way!" Gu Fei had been incessantly training his kung fu and grinding, only rushing back to the city when he supposed that it was almost time for the meeting. Parallel World did not provide any fast travel methods back and forth the city. Officials euphemistically explained that it was to maintain the game's realistic atmosphere, but the players all believed it as a move by the game company to artificially lengthen the time players had to spend online. The best evidence to support this was the fact that the game would employ the use of a time-card instead of a monthly

subscription in the future.

“Awesome,” Sword Demon replied.

“Where’s the meeting place? I’ll head there directly,” Gu Fei asked.

“Ray’s Bar,” Sword Demon answered.

“Okay! I’m headed there now,” Gu Fei responded.

Ray’s Bar was a legend as it had the status of being Parallel World’s first player-set-up shop. Players were required to reach level 20 before they could set up their private shops. Yet, the level requirement was not the issue; it was actually the amount needed to purchase a shop.

The system would not intervene or levy fees if players were to set up stalls by the streets. But if they wished to set up actual shops, they would have to buy them through the system with the in-game currency: coins.

Although the cities in the game were large, the buyable assets available were still limited and really expensive. Therefore, no one had considered the possibility of a player being able to purchase a shop just after reaching level 20, and one with quite a sizable floor space at that.

How in the world did he gather so many coins in just a week? There was only one probable explanation after much thought: He used real-world currency to purchase pieces of equipment through the Trade Exchange, and then sold these items for coins in the Auction House. A rich person!

No one could figure out why he chose to open a bar after accumulating so many gold coins, though. While the bar currently had a rather decent number of patrons, once the open beta ended and the time-cards started to be used, there was no guarantee that those players would still willingly waste their time there. Furthermore, the system’s NPC-operated bars had all sorts of

alcoholic products already; in contrast, where would a player find all these liquors in his bar? Although players with the Brewmaster crafting profession could brew alcohol, the quantity they could make would not be that much considering their current levels. It would be far too ridiculous for him as well to purchase the drinks from the system-established bars just to resell them in his store.

Yet, Ray's Bar did exactly that. He was buying and selling alcoholic beverages at their original prices while incurring the cost of the system's shop transaction tax; it was basically a business built to lose money!

Losing money yet still persevering! What a passionate man! everyone thought.

But for a wealthy and passionate man, his name was rather plain: Ray.

His name was the first one to become well-known in Parallel World, although many people privately thought of him as a fool. In any case, given the countless cities in-game, players were randomly spawned into any of them on the first day of open beta. For this stubborn fool to be spawned in Yunduan City, players who spawned there as well considered it as a source of pride!

Gu Fei naturally knew about this famous person and his equally famous establishment; he had been there once with Fireball after all. He had even personally seen the much acclaimed Ray standing by the bar selling alcohol.

Despite continuously losing money every day, Ray still chose to man the bar and serve the customers himself. It seemed he was not even level 30 yet! He was a person who had truly shed materialistic pursuits. Half of the people visiting Ray's Bar rushed to pay their respects to the man who had transcended beyond the mortal philistine ways.

As Gu Fei arrived just outside Ray's Bar, he checked the time and saw that it was exactly two in the afternoon. He pushed the door

and went inside after taking a deep breath.

He scanned the room but didn't see Sword Demon's group. As he was about to send Sword Demon a message, [Comrade Ray](#) called out, "Can I help you with anything?"

"I'm looking for someone," Gu Fei described Sword Demon's features.

His looks were definitely extraordinarily ugly. Gu Fei barely began describing Sword Demon's appearance, yet Ray had already pointed to a particular direction, "Room 3." As a bar opened by a player, the place did not look antiquated unlike the system-operated taverns. Ray had even used wooden poles to partition some parts of the bar into several private rooms, making the place looked just like a typical modern bar in reality.

"Thanks!" Gu Fei said.

"You're welcome. Call me if you need anything," Ray's affable smile was truly worthy of his reputation.

"Ray!" Gu Fei wagged his finger and said, "I knew it! Your real name must be [Ray Feng](#), right?"

"Very funny," Ray laughed.

Gu Fei smiled as he took his leave and made his way toward Room 3.

The wooden poles functioning as walls of the room did not have enough space for a door, so a piece of cloth was used as a doorway curtain instead. Gu Fei grabbed the cloth and shook it slightly, as if he was knocking on a door.

"Come in!" someone inside said.

As Gu Fei lifted the cloth to enter, he saw the person sitting right across the entrance.

One word: pretty.

Two words: very beautiful.

Three words: too f*cking attractive.

Four words: How was this possible?

Five words: That was actually a man?

The person was seated next to Sword Demon, facing the entrance. Gu Fei would not have believed he was a man if it wasn't for that flat chest and prominent Adam's apple.

The person had an arm around Sword Demon's shoulders. He raised the other arm to point at Gu Fei when he entered, "That the guy?"

Sword Demon nodded as he rushed toward Gu Fei, "You're here!"

Gu Fei nodded, "Yup."

That Adonis pointed toward the empty seat across him and said, "Have a seat!"

Gu Fei only noticed the other three persons after he had sat down. Plain, simple, and common faces. Compared to the beauty-and-the-beast contrast between Sword Demon and that person, the three looked so ordinary that Gu Fei had difficulty identifying their uniqueness.

"Let me introduce everyone," Sword Demon said to Gu Fei. Starting from the person beside Gu Fei, "War Without Wounds! He's a Warrior."

War Without Wounds was a middle-aged uncle who was very well-built, giving off a very mature and dependable aura. "Hello!" He extended his arm as he continued to introduce himself, "I love warriors, so I always choose to be a Warrior when I play online games."

"And he would always be the game's number 1 Warrior," Sword Demon added.

"Hello!" Gu Fei removed his straw hat with his left hand as his right hand quickly shook the proffered hand at him. He

immediately realized that the Warrior had quite a strong grip. It was expected, given how Warriors would put a majority of their stat points into Strength. Gu Fei was a pure-Agility Mage, so that handshake felt as if his bones had shattered. Thankfully he did not make things difficult for Gu Fei, loosening his grip after a while, as it was clearly done out of habit. Gu Fei could only smile wryly. This was the first time in his life that a handshake had left him in an unfavorable position.

“This is Brother Assist. His online games’ job class is always randomly chosen. This time he’s a Knight. Brother Assist excels in gathering information; he usually notices details that others may have overlooked,” Sword Demon introduced the second person.

“Brother Assist? You don’t look that old,” Gu Fei extended his hand once more.

“Sorry! My name’s actually You Ge. Sorry if you feel cheated,” Brother Assist scratched his head embarrassedly, before reaching over to shake Gu Fei’s hand. He had a friendly smile and was clearly a very easy-going person.

“I see,” Gu Fei smiled.

“This is Royal God Call. He excels as a Mage, yet he chose to be an Archer this time,” Sword Demon introduced the third person. The person was not too old and his face was unsmiling. He exuded the air of teenage arrogance and disdain. He was most likely a student.

“Hello!” Gu Fei extended his hand with a more serious attitude than he had with the previous two. Gu Fei knew that the best way to interact with kids was to not treat them as children; Gu Fei needed to make him feel regarded.

Royal God Call was apparently a petty person as he unexpectedly did not even bother to extend his hand. He merely snorted with disdain, “Hmph.”

This nasty piece of sh*t, disregarding his elders despite his youth!

Gu Fei silently rebuked.

“This guy’s the last one! Young Master Han; he’s my old online gaming partner. His job class has always been a Priest,” Sword Demon finally introduced the one next to him.

Comrade Ray - is written in the original novel as 小雷同志. 同志, which means ‘comrade’ in this case. It is commonly used to address a fellow compatriot in a communist state.

Ray Feng - is written in the original novel as 雷锋. He was a soldier of the People’s Liberation Army, as well as a communist legend and a cultural icon in China. He was a Communist Party loyalist known for being selfless and humble, and thus seen as a model citizen.

Chapter 17 - Meeting at Ray's Bar (Part 2)

Gu Fei was indeed guilty of judging a book by its cover every now and then. Among the four strangers within the room, he had the most interest in this particular man, especially since his extremely arresting appearance formed a sharp contrast with Sword Demon's inconspicuous looks.

Gu Fei suddenly recalled an old saying: A beautiful girl would always choose to befriend an ugly girl so as to accentuate her beauty. Could Young Master Han and Sword Demon's partnership be a result of this mentality? But as he thought of this, he knew he was mistaken. They were only online buddies before Parallel World, so meeting each other face to face was not necessary. If this was a planned juxtaposition, then it wouldn't make any sense.

It seemed that the clash between their looks was truly just a coincidence.

Nevertheless, it was truly a cruel pairing of an impossibly beautiful man with an incomparably ugly man.

But the fact that Young Master Han had not abandoned Sword Demon, like so many others, upon seeing his true appearance spoke volumes of his character.

Since the two's distance was far from the others by Gu Fei's side, they only nodded and said their hellos to each other for convenience's sake.

Once it was over, Sword Demon turned to introduce Gu Fei to the rest.

"This person's Thousand Miles Drunk. His job class is..." Sword Demon hesitated for a moment, "A Mage."

"What?! You're a Mage?" everyone aside from Young Master Han and Sword Demon blurted out in surprise. The three had learned the Appraisal skill but they didn't use it during the friendly

introductions to avoid appearing disrespectful. They were all experienced online gaming pros that abided by this unspoken code of conduct. They could only speculate about Gu Fei's job class before being formally introduced to them by Sword Demon.

Sword Demon had an I-knew-this-would-happen expression as he innocently looked at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei was rather surprised as well. He indicated his robe before saying, "Didn't you guys notice that I'm wearing a mage robe?"

The three looked at each other. It was precisely because of the robe that they assumed he was not a Mage. What kind of level 30 Mage would still be wearing a beginner's robe? They had thought Gu Fei wore the mage robe to look more presentable on the outside, as the gear he was wearing within must have been the worse for wear. To think he was indeed a Mage. Sometimes, the calculative minds of pros would backfire when faced with individuals like him who did not put much thought in their appearance.

However, the beginner's robe was not the only item that threw the three off. This was the first time any of them met a Mage who wore a straw hat. Their eyes all fell on the straw hat that Gu Fei had thrown haphazardly on the table.

As the one who recommended Gu Fei, Sword Demon felt compelled to say a few words, "Yes, he's indeed a Mage."

A Mage wearing low-grade equipment?! Noob! the three thought in unison.

"Do you know how to fight using the Frost-fire duo-play method? Or the differences between and uses of anti-fire and anti-frost magic? How about Chain Lightning's use when it leaves your body?" Royal God Call, a professional Mage job class player, fired off these three questions based on the three classic spells from three famous online games at once.

In the end, Gu Fei simply replied, “Are they all used in Parallel World?”

Royal God Call was stunned for a beat, but he reacted quickly and retorted, “If you don’t even know these things, how can you be an expert Mage?”

Gu Fei laughed at this. What was the point of arguing with a kid? Besides, he never wanted to be an expert Mage.

Suddenly, Brother Assist asked, “Thousand Miles Drunk, is this how you write your name’s characters?” As he was speaking, his finger dipped into the liquor on the table and wrote out each character.

“That’s right,” Gu Fei nodded.

“You’re number two in terms of leveling efficiency based on the official statistics!” Brother Assist

“Hmm? What’s that?” Gu Fei asked.

“The official in-game statistics’ player rankings. The rankings are based on the total experience points earned by each player. For example, War Without Wounds is currently the first for all Warriors based on his total experience points earned; Sword Demon is the third among Thieves; Young Master here is fourth among Priests; while it is Royal’s first time playing as an Archer, so he’s probably unfamiliar with the class, and thus only ranked eleventh. Your second-place ranking is based on the experience points you earned versus the time you are online. By the amount of players Parallel World has, even Royal’s eleventh placement is a very incredible result,” Brother Assist explained.

“And you?” Gu Fei asked inquisitively.

Brother Assist once again scratched his head in embarrassment, “I’m the number one commenter on the game’s official forums.”

Everyone laughed as Royal God Call said, “Brother Assist spent most of his time on those forums, so he’s not even on the

leaderboard for efficiency within the Mage job class. What about you? What's your rank?"

Gu Fei could only look toward Brother Assist as he had never checked it himself.

Brother Assist laughed guiltily, "Sorry, I only noted those I know well and the high rankers. I don't think I've seen your name up there."

"I knew it!" Royal God Call declared, "What's the point of being ranked based on efficiency? Going online to grind and logging off immediately once you finish grinding; if that's the only time you're online, anyone can get on that leaderboard."

"Royal, if you've seen how Miles grind monsters, you would definitely not say that," Sword Demon finally spoke.

Royal God Call suddenly remembered Gu Fei was someone Sword Demon brought in. Considering Sword Demon's standard, he would not possibly make a mistake. With such a thought, he finally quieted down.

Gu Fei's interest was piqued, however, so he asked, "Brother Assist, who's the player that's ranked first on that leaderboard for efficiency?"

"Fleeting Smile," Brother Assist answered.

"So it's him!" Gu Fei shuddered.

"Do you know him? What's his job class?" This got Sword Demon's attention. Originally, he was just like Royal God Call with regard to the efficiency rankings. But after interacting with Gu Fei, he realized that it was highly likely that an expert could be lurking within the efficiency leaderboard. Upon hearing that Gu Fei knew the person ranked first, he quickly wanted to inquire some information.

Fleeting Smile had specifically told Gu Fei not to reveal his real identity to other people, so Gu Fei could only shake his head, "I've

seen him but I'm not familiar with him. I don't know his job class either."

They must be strangers since he did not even know his job class. Sword Demon did not pursue the matter any longer. Gu Fei truly did not know what sort of job class Fleeting Smile had.

After the initial introductions were over, Young Master Han immediately began to speak, "This is it. We are tentatively the six members of this mercenary group. For us five old acquaintances to have spawned in Yunduan City together is nothing less than a stroke of luck. Let bygones be bygones. In Parallel World, we are all brother-at-arms."

The three nodded in agreement. Gu Fei inferred that these people were not friends before and most likely had their issues with one another. He wondered who it might be as he checked them all out. He felt Royal God Call was the likely person to have a grudge against a top expert like Sword Demon, given his impression of the d*mn kid that reeked of rampant arrogance.

Young Master Han continued, "I will be blunt. I don't intend to join a guild this time. I'll mainly focus my efforts on this mercenary group. I demand quality not quantity from my fellow members. So if I discover anyone performing below par, I'll kick that person out immediately."

Gu Fei was very certain that these words were spoken for his sake. He was not an online gaming expert like them after all. Sword Demon's introduction of him alone had left much to be desired. But getting kicked out due to being underrated was actually what Gu Fei wanted to happen. He was only here as filler for the team since he felt he owed Sword Demon. It would be best if he could just leave after a little sightseeing!

As Gu Fei thought about this, Young Master Han continued speaking, "I received a mercenary mission submitted by a player. It's considered as not doable, but that's only if everyone here's a

normal player. Since we are all well-known, outstanding experts, if we work together and with luck, we can do it. Once we accomplish this task, Brother Assist will flood the forums about us for a couple of days. Then, we'll simply wait for others to seek our mercenary group for aid! Ha ha ha ha!"

Young Master Han's speech at first was rather fitting, but Gu Fei felt that it had become rather distasteful by the end. He sounded rather vain. But it was truly unavoidable. With his beautiful looks, looking in the mirror daily would make him develop a narcissistic personality.

Young Master Han raised his glass to quench his parched throat after his spiel, only to suddenly stop as he stared into the glass with interest.

"Is something the matter?" Sword Demon asked.

"It's just too beautiful!" praised Young Master Han.

"What is?" Sword Demon was puzzled.

"The beautiful face reflected in this glass... Why must God bless me with such a perfect face! Oh, the hardship I must bear!" he said as his face revealed an enthralled expression.

Everyone fell to the ground face-first.

Sword Demon and Brother Assist reacted a little better in comparison. One was a friend while the other was an information specialist; they must have developed a certain degree of tolerance toward Young Master Han's narcissism.

As for Gu Fei and the rest, they were on the verge of collapsing at the current moment. The look of admiration on Young Master Han's face only served to induce greater nausea among the three.

His expression seemed real. Was it possible to reach such a level of narcissism in this world? This trip had truly been an eye-opener for Gu Fei.

Sword Demon hastily snatched away the glass from Young Master Han's hands, returning him back to his senses as he cleared his throat, "Ahem. Let's discuss in detail this mission now. Brother Assist, you—"

"Wait!" Gu Fei suddenly called out.

"What's the matter?" asked Young Master Han as everyone looked at Gu Fei.

"It's almost 2:30 p.m.," Gu Fei said.

"That's right!" everyone affirmed.

"I've got something on," Gu Fei said apologetically.

"Ah?" everyone said in shock.

"I thought we're meeting at 2 p.m. to form the team. I didn't expect we would be discussing many things. I've got a class at 2:30 p.m.," Gu Fei explained.

"Class? You're a student as well?" Royal God Call stared at Gu Fei with widened eyes. At this very moment, he felt a sense of closeness toward Gu Fei.

"Nope!" Gu Fei laughed as he gazed at him, "I'm a teacher."

Royal God Call abruptly felt Gu Fei looked ten times more evil than before.

"Sorry, but I really have to go. Can we discuss this later tonight?" Gu Fei said.

"Alright!" Young Master Han waved his hand, "We'll speak again later tonight!"

"Thanks!"

"It's not easy to join the team I lead; you must seize this chance! I've a good feeling about you!" Young Master Han articulated.

"I'll do my best. See you!" Gu Fei wiped his sweat. This person was really far too narcissistic.

Chapter 18 - Crisis of Faith

Gu Fei rushed to his physical education class after he got offline.

Since P.E. lesson was held just twice a week, almost every athletics teacher would instruct a few classes in a row. Today just happened to be one of the busiest for Gu Fei, as he handled three successive classes in one afternoon.

Gu Fei was somewhat distracted at the moment. The people he had just met a while ago had very unique personalities, yet their online gaming skills were exceptional. While Gu Fei's kung fu skills were extraordinary, his gaming ability was truly lacking. Therefore, he felt that it might be inappropriate to display his kung fu skills fully when following such pinnacle experts.

While he pondered on this, the students had all arrived on the sports field and assembled themselves into waiting groups. Gu Fei quickly collected his thoughts and devoted his attention toward teaching the class curriculum. At this moment, he sighed in his heart, These students are so obedient unlike that obnoxious and arrogant Royal God Call!

Ah Fa respectfully came up beside Gu Fei as he was thinking this, "Sir...."

"What's the matter?" Gu Fei asked.

"What's your level now?" Ah Fa quietly inquired. Gu Fei had forbidden Ah Fa from revealing the fact that he was playing Parallel World to anyone.

"Level 30," Gu Fei answered.

"Holy sh*t!" Ah Fa blurted out in surprise.

"Is that how you're supposed to talk to your teacher?!" Gu Fei suddenly displayed a livid expression. He had not expected his class to have an ill-mannered and conceited student just like Royal God Call.

Ah Fa wore a wronged expression; he had accidentally treated his teacher as his buddy!

“Concentrate on your exercises! Stop constantly thinking about games. You’re a student, so focus on your studies more. Got it?” Gu Fei lectured.

Ah Fa dispiritedly replied, “Got it” before scuttling away.

Gu Fei calmly continued to instruct the students, providing the same lesson to each class throughout the afternoon. Teaching these classes felt boring compared to playing the VR game, even though he was also doing physical activities here. Naturally, it would be a different story altogether had Gu Fei been teaching the students kung fu. When the final class was about to end, Gu Fei attempted to introduce a small activity to the students, “Is there any of you who wishes to learn a bit of kung fu from me?”

“Eh...” all the students were flabbergasted.

Looks like they’re interested! Gu Fei’s eyes shone. After countless attempts, had he finally piqued the students’ interest? “Ahem!” he cleared his throat. Just as he was about to give further instructions, all the students suddenly dispersed. He could hear from the distance someone shouting, “BIG NEWS! SUPER HOT NEWS! TEACHER GU FEI MENTIONED HIS KUNG FU AGAIN!”

It looked like kung fu really was useless in real life; Gu Fei felt depressed.

Gu Fei went back into Parallel World after he finished work and had his dinner.

“We’re all waiting for you! Same location,” Sword Demon immediately sent Gu Fei a message once he got online.

Gu Fei hurriedly made his way toward Ray’s Bar from the log-off point. The log-off point actually referred to a safe zone. Given the huge number of players the game had, players were required to go offline in safe zones, so as to funnel them into a select few areas to

speed up the process of archiving each player's data and to reduce the burden on the servers. While it was possible to forcefully log off in the other zones, the officials warned that they would not be responsible if the players lost the items gained, experience earned, or even their whole character data as a result.

A player posed a hypothetical query: "What if some despicable players tie me up on the very top of a mountain or deep into a forest and prevent me from dying or returning to a safe zone? What should I do, then?"

[The system announcement: Our GMs would be on standby at your service.]

All the players cursed upon hearing this. Any veteran online gamers knew that the specialty of GMs was the fact that they were never online.

Gu Fei quickly made his way to Ray's Bar. Ray smiled as he pointed toward one of the rooms, "They're waiting for you in there!"

"Thanks!" Gu Fei hurriedly entered the room.

The five people were seated inside, waiting for Gu Fei's grand arrival.

"Have you guys waited long?" Gu Fei sat down.

"Not really," Young Master Han replied lightly, "Just the whole afternoon."

Gu Fei was dejected. This man was not only narcissistic, but sarcastic as well.

"Don't we have a mission to discuss? Let's begin!" Gu Fei said.

"We're already done with the discussion," Young Master Han said, "We're about to head out for the mission."

"Oh...."

"We've already talked about what each of us will do. Your job for

this mission is simple so we didn't wait for your input," Brother Assist explained with a smile, displaying his friendliness once more, "Young Master Han, you should tell Miles the gist, especially his task."

Young Master Han nodded before he began explaining, "This is a bounty mission. Our target is the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto in Oolong Cave. This is the toughest mission I know of. I once helped a team of twenty-seven players to solve it; we lost twenty along the way, yet we still failed in the end. But those are just regular players. This team has few but elite members, making it much easier to coordinate with one another. You're not needed in the early part of the mission, so just follow behind us. Your debut will be when we engage Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto."

"Sooto's staying in a small hut inside Oolong Cave. There's not much space inside the hut, so we can't all enter and fight him. If we're not careful, it might become a deathtrap for anyone stuck inside. Although outside the hut is wide, Sooto will whistle and summon all his lackeys inside the cave for support once he exits the hut. Our plan is to trap Sooto within the hut while you unleash your level 30 Mage spell, Repeating Fireball, on him. But you're not allowed to directly attack Sooto since we're on the doorway, so you'll have to fire the spell somewhere inside the hut. Since the explosions will apply an area-of-effect damage, Sooto will naturally be hurt by it. While it's not the most efficient method, we can use it to slowly chip his health away since he doesn't seem to have a regenerative skill or equipment. Once the situation stabilizes, it's just a matter of repeating our skills."

Everyone laughed.

"What do you think? Your job's pretty easy, right?" Young Master Han asked Gu Fei.

Gu Fei nodded.

"Alright then, let's set off! I've already told the player who

submitted this mission to meet us outside the Oolong Cave at 7 p.m. It's about time."

"Okay. All of you should go ahead first. I'll catch up after," Gu Fei got up.

"Huh? You've got something else again?" Young Master Han furrowed his eyebrows.

Gu Fei nodded, "I need to return to the Mage Academy to learn my level 30 spell, Repeating Fireball." He turned around and rushed out once he finished his sentence.

Everyone inside the room immediately became listless after hearing what Gu Fei said. Their gaze all landed on Sword Demon within half a beat. Their eyes were filled with suspicion, denial, and disbelief.

Sword Demon raised his glass and acted as if he did not notice what had happened, only to have Young Master Han snatched it away from him.

Sword Demon did not protest.

"Did you make a mistake this time, Sword Demon?" Royal God Call was the first to ask.

"I have absolute faith in his ability," Sword Demon insisted.

Royal God Call snorted coldly, "You believe in someone who hadn't even learned his level 30 spell?"

Sword Demon snorted back, "I'd believe in you too if you could defeat my level 25 Thief with a level 10 Mage."

"What?!" They all turned their heads to him in question. Since it was not a glorious moment, Sword Demon did not want more people to be privy of that particular defeat. The four were not convinced that his recommendation of Gu Fei held merit, thus Sword Demon's only option was to tell them about his embarrassing match. A level 10 Mage completely overwhelmed the

level 25 Thief Sword Demon, who was an online gaming expert; no one would have believed such a claim had Sword Demon not said it himself.

Seeing their reaction, Sword Demon could only laugh bitterly, “It’s not something I wanted, but a loss is a loss; it was a fair fight, too.”

“Level 10 Mage? How did he fight you with just the Fireball and Ring of Fire spells?” Royal God Call mumbled. Even though he had not chosen to be a Mage in Parallel World, he still took note of the class itself. He quickly pondered every avenue that would allow a Mage to accomplish such a feat.

“Were you unable to get close due to his Ring of Fire being too high level?” Royal God Call began guessing.

“Nope. He didn’t use Ring of Fire,” Sword Demon shook his head.

“Instantly killed by a high-level Fireball spell as his equipment amplified the damage?” he kept on guessing.

“He only used Fireball twice to control my movement,” Sword Demon explained.

“Then how did he beat you? Don’t tell me he used his fists!”

Sword Demon sighed, “You’re all wrong if you think that there’s no more control in this VR game. You’ll know what having peak control means when you see Miles fight monsters later.”

“Peak control?” the four said blankly. The name was coined by Sword Demon after all. Even Gu Fei didn’t know that his kung fu was seen as “control” by an online gaming pro, actually claiming that it was the peak.

Sword Demon nodded, “How do you guys think he managed to become number two on the efficiency leaderboard? It’s through control.”

The four were still at a loss.

Brother Assist was the first to speak after hearing all this, “Interesting, I should do some proper research on Thousand Miles Drunk.”

Royal God Call maintained his look of suspicion, barely containing himself from pointing at and calling Sword Demon a liar. If Gu Fei was truly someone amazing, then Royal God Call would be very upset. He had chosen a different job class this time for fun because he had considered himself as the unparalleled top expert in all things pertaining to the Mage job class. A player that even the undisputed professional gamer Sword Demon would consider as an expert, he didn’t think he would meet one so soon. This is just far too improbable! Sword Demon must be mistaken, Royal God Call quietly reassured himself.

War Without Wounds had not said a word. He revealed neither the excitement that was etched on Brother Assist’s face nor the complex emotions playing on Royal God Call’s face.

As for Young Master Han, he simply stared at Sword Demon and said, “I know you’re not one to joke around.”

“Of course,” Sword Demon said.

“Let’s hope this isn’t an exception. Let’s go!” Young Master Han got up.

“Okay!” Sword Demon answered. With doubt swirling in their heads, the five legendary online gaming pros began their journey together.

Chapter 19 - Refusing to Improve

Oolong Cave was located exactly in Oolong Mountain.

Oolong Mountain was about five hundred meters northwest of Yunduan City's west gate. The mountain was rife with bandits, and the official description for the mountain stated that it was an ideal grinding and looting map for players between levels 25 and 30.

However, what was inside Oolong Cave was completely different from Oolong Mountain. The bandits within it were around level 35 and were largely considered as elite among the criminal NPCs lurking on the mountain. The cave had messy passageways with plenty of twists and turns which made it easy for players to lose their way. GMs did not consider it as reasonable grounds to help players who made such a silly mistake of losing their way inside the cave. This caused the players to curse once more the game officials who had made the statement about the ever-ready-to-assist GMs.

Gu Fei's statement before leaving to learn a new spell in the Mage Academy had caused Sword Demon and the others to become listless and resulted into the eruption of an argument. So when Gu Fei arrived to the cave, he could not catch even a glimpse of their shadow. Instead, he spotted a player, most likely a Mage, pitifully squatting beside the entrance.

Is he our employer? Gu Fei pondered silently, before going forward and greeting the person, "Hello!"

The person raised his head and looked at Gu Fei, "Hello."

"What are you doing here?" Gu Fei asked.

"I'm waiting for some people," he replied.

"Are you waiting for those who agreed to help you finish Oolong Cave's bounty mission?" Gu Fei pressed on.

“Why do you know that?” the person said in shock.

Gu Fei chuckled, “That’s because I am one of those people.”

“Oh! You’re someone from the Young Master’s Elite group!” the person immediately stood up.

Gu Fei had just found out his mercenary group’s name. The name was rather detestable but it was understandable. Given the level of Young Master Han’s narcissism, how could the group he formed not be named after himself?

“Why are you the only one present?” he asked.

“The rest will arrive shortly.”

“Oh!” the man answered and began to closely size up Gu Fei. He had previously mistaken Gu Fei as a mere passerby and had not even bothered to raise his head to acknowledge him. Once the employer knew that he would be one of the key factors for the success of his quest, he started to take note of him and was left shocked by what he discovered.

A straw hat, a beginner’s mage robe, and a pair of casual shoes worn by Thieves – he was wearing three different types of equipment with opposing styles. This unique blend had the employer stumped! He sneakily used Appraisal on Gu Fei and confirmed his job class as Mage.

He immediately focused on the magic staff Gu Fei was holding. It had a very innovative design: elongated, flat, and simple. It even had a hand-guard attached to it. What sort of rare item is that? the person quietly speculated.

Gu Fei turned just then; he placed his hand across his eyebrows as he looked down the mountain trail and finally spotted the figures of the five people.

Everyone met right outside the cave entrance. Young Master Han introduced each member of the team to the employer. Seeing that they were all renowned players from other online games, he could

not help but be thrilled. The living legends of the online gaming world! He deeply admired the Mage pro player Royal God Call as he was a Mage player himself, so he was especially disappointed when he found out that the latter had decided to be an Archer instead of a Mage in Parallel World.

When they got to Gu Fei, the employer who kept spouting “I heard so much about you”, “Pleasure meeting you”, “It’s an honor” had finally stopped using those phrases.

Thousand Miles Drunk? Who’s that? Never heard of him. What does he do? Is he a pro? Everyone could guess what the employer had on his mind from his expression alone.

Gu Fei did not actually mind. He was never part of their clique after all. Gu Fei’s prestige would have preceded him had anyone asked about him among those who practiced kung fu. Alas, there were significantly fewer people active in the kung fu community compared to the online gaming community.

“Do you even play online games, bro?” sounded like a legitimate insult over here.

But the question “Do you know kung fu?” would have sounded preposterous to them.

The things they were exposed to were worlds apart! Gu Fei was feeling rather disappointed just as everyone began to enter the cave.

Young Master Han repeated his final instruction, “We’ll take care of all the monsters along the way. You two just have to follow closely behind. Don’t get into fight, got it?”

Gu Fei and the employer nodded. He was visibly excited but Gu Fei was listless. He was instructed: “Don’t get into fight.” But the sole reason he even played this game was to “get into fight”!

The cave’s pathway was rugged and had no obvious light source, but players could still see clearly what was in front of them. It

could be considered as one of the few miracles the game provided. It did not take long for them to encounter enemies. Gu Fei and the employer obediently stayed behind the group's formation and struck up a conversation in boredom.

"You're a Mage as well?" the employer asked.

Gu Fei nodded.

"What's your level?" he asked once more.

"Level 30. What about you?" courtesy demanded this follow-up question.

"25" the person said as his eyes revealed a glimmer of worship.

"Your magic staff is very unique!" he said.

"Magic staff?" Gu Fei was stunned for a while before coming back to his senses and smiling brightly. He offered the item to him, "Try it."

"Really?" the person was taken aback. Casually handing his equipment to others. How dauntless! he said to himself as he dutifully received the item. He shuddered as he took it into his hand, slowly calming himself down to properly inspect it. He immediately shouted, "F*ck!"

This was not a magic staff! This was clearly a sword. It looked like it was a cross between a western longsword and a Tang sword, which was basically a generic weapon with no special properties; it could be found anywhere in the game. But it was far too unusual to find it in the hands of a Mage.

The employer concluded that this Mage would most probably be holding a blade for the looks. Ultimately, having a longsword slung by your waist was a lot cooler than having a magic staff.

I should get one as well! the person thought as he approached the expert and returned the sword.

While the two were having a leisurely chat, the fight ahead of

them had become fiercer.

The monsters were five levels above the players fighting them right now!

It was not easy to beat monsters beyond a player's level in Parallel World. It was already a given that the player's average equipment would be of no match to these monsters. If the player was slightly better geared, it would be slightly doable. Only with outstanding equipment could the player properly attempt to engage and survive fights against higher level monsters. The gaming pros currently assembled were not only very well-geared, they possessed great instinct as well.

That's right, instinct! In VRMMOs, it was no longer about having superb keyboard operating skill but actual combat skills! Would the common players possess such a thing aside from Gu Fei? Therefore, instinct became a deciding factor in differentiating the good and bad players.

Knowledge in usage and control, experience from practice, etc. all became the building blocks of instinct.

These people ahead of him were quite possibly among the people with the most outstanding gaming instincts.

They easily coordinated and complemented one another beyond the realm of the normal players while they were fighting the monsters.

Archer Royal God Call would swiftly shoot an arrow to a monster, causing it to promptly turn and make its way toward him. Sword Demon who was on Stealth would instantly score a Backstab when the monster turned. When the monster tried to face Sword Demon, he would have already run off. War Without Wounds and Brother Assist would then rush over and position themselves on the left and right of the monster to trap it, then they would slash in a frenzy to hold its aggro. Sword Demon would then return into the combat and finish off the monster together with

the others. Young Master Han's healing would timely be bestowed on each and they would recover their health at just the right moment, and not a single point of restoration would be wasted.

This was the quickest and most efficient way of engaging into a combat. More importantly, they knew only to fight the monsters that crossed their path and nothing more.

This was the main reason why Young Master Han would not allow the two Mages, Gu Fei and the employer, to join in the fight. A Mage's spell-casting, attack, and radiance would draw aggro from a large area. They were not able to concentrate their attacks on a single target. What was aggro? To put it simply, it was a monster's judgment of the player's threat. The value from the calculation of this algorithm could be understood as aggro. Once the value passed a certain threshold, the monster would initiate an attack on the player. If there were multiple players simultaneously threatening the monsters, he would target the player with the highest aggro.

Because Mages could draw aggro from a wide area with their attacks, it was very easy to draw three or five monsters toward them with just one attack. That was definitely not something players would want to happen.

The target for their current mission was the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto, so they should not be wasting any time along the way. Young Master Han's way always emphasized on completing missions with speed and efficiency.

Furthermore, Parallel World actively recorded the time players took to accomplish missions. Over at the Quest Handling Counter, the employer would have his name jotted down as the quest taker, yet Young Master's Elite would have their group name recorded in the Great Hall of Mercenaries. This was the best way to prove the strength of their mercenary group.

As the group used this extremely efficient method to progress

through the cave, Young Master Han could not help but be impressed. Were it not for the dominance that the Parallel World currently had over all other online games, it was truly hard to even imagine all these experts working together. On that note, Young Master Han turned back and looked for the stragglers. He found Gu Fei and the employer unhurriedly making their way behind the team, acting like a pair of tourists taking a tour as they casually related to one another and took in the sights and sounds of the cave. They seemed to be absolutely oblivious to the wondrous coordination that was happening right in front of them.

Young Master Han could not help but feel dismayed. Gu Fei was a member of the group. Compared to these online gaming pros that already had some levels of interactions with one another before, Gu Fei was a total stranger to them. He expected Gu Fei to quickly familiarize himself with each member's specialty, attitude, and combat habits so that he could fit in without compromising their current efficiency and to effectively contribute toward the group.

And yet, he had not grasped this golden opportunity to observe and learn. Instead, he spent the time chatting over god knew what with that weak level 25 Mage!

Young Master Han felt a fire burning in his heart! Yet, he was not able to guide Gu Fei right now. The other members who were busily fighting monsters were more pressed for his attention. Priest was a job class that had a rather busy and tiresome role. Many players thought a Priest's job was to heal others like a doctor; that it was most suitable for ladies to play since they were not required to spill blood. In truth, a great Priest player would need to have the ability to see the bigger picture, have superior concentration, be able to calmly make judgments as well as pivotal split-second decisions, and have a good sense in creating and grasping opportunities. Not many female players could reach such standards. Thus, while there were a lot of women who played the Priest job class, the real peak experts were all male players.

That was the role Young Master Han played. In the past, it was always his partner Sword Demon that took the lead in online games, and he was the right hand man. But now that the virtual reality had exposed Sword Demon's real appearance, he had been crushed by what happened afterward, and the incidents had left him somewhat dejected. So Young Master Han decided to personally take up the mantle and form a group with himself as the core.

Being a perfectionist, he could not stand to see his new recruit Gu Fei's lack of effort in trying to find ways to fit in, even appearing to treat this mission as a leisure tour. He would have rushed over and lectured Gu Fei without restraint if his hands were not tied to the current fights.

Chapter 20 - The Secret Pathway in Oolong Cave

Sword Demon and the rest had no time to remain watchful of their backs as they were fully occupied with dispatching the monsters in front. Unlike Young Master Han, the others were not so inflexible regarding how to carry out their mission. They didn't think there was a need to observe how well the others were doing, especially when a team member was not assigned to do anything.

Young Master Han tried to think of a way to backtrack and give Gu Fei a piece of his mind, but having accepted this particular mission before, he was aware that he could not do that now as they had already advanced further into Oolong Cave. The deeper one ventured into the cave, the higher the monsters' levels were. Seeing how the surroundings would get even more cramped the deeper they went, they could only make sure not to commit any mistakes to avoid alerting any additional monsters.

They had to keep this up until they reached a stone door. Once they got there, they would have to face a quite competent Mini Boss, which was guarding a lever that opened the door. Once the Mini Boss was taken care of, the pathway to Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto's chamber would be revealed by pulling the lever.

Young Master Han had carefully planned for their actions and kept track of the time, but he failed to notice that a mishap had occurred behind their backs.

The cave's pathway was steep and rocky, and it was difficult to walk on it.

Their employer got careless for a moment, lost his footing, and wobbled to the side with a few unsteady steps.

"Careful!" Gu Fei warned him just verbally as he could see that the employer merely lost his balance and did not actually fall

down.

The employer balanced himself and thanked Gu Fei. At that moment, Gu Fei felt something was amiss within the darkness behind the employer.

“Get away quickly!” Gu Fei dashed forward as he shouted.

The employer had yet to regain his composure when he saw Gu Fei dash past him and take a position behind his back.

Clink! It was a crisp sound of swords clashing. Gu Fei had unsheathed the scabbard from his sword, and was able to timely defend against the shadow within the darkness.

“Hurry up and leave! No need to help me!” Gu Fei turned around and said.

“F*ck!” Gu Fei cursed after seeing that the employer had already run far away. He clearly had no intention of helping Gu Fei. From his perspective, he hired Gu Fei and the others to help him, so of course they had the responsibility and obligation to protect him. It was only natural for Gu Fei to endanger himself to keep the employer safe. As for him helping Gu Fei instead? F*ck! Why would I hire you lot in the first place if I could deal with these monsters myself? was what the employer was thinking.

“Oh, fine! Just keep on running!” Gu Fei said to him as he kept on fighting.

The employer started to have some doubts as he ran away. He’s a Mage, right? Yet, he seems to be fighting the monster using a sword? Oh, yeah! He’s trying to increase its aggro rate against him, so that it will focus more on him instead of me! He’s a pro alright!

The employer hastily rushed himself back to the main group, leaving Gu Fei to handle the enemy alone.

It was difficult to engage in combat within the darkness. Gu Fei was slowly retreating as he fought, and as he reached the intersection, a ray of light from god knew where had allowed Gu

Fei to have a clearer look of the opponent. It was a Mountain Bandit, but one wearing a blue outfit.

What did the blue outfit signify? It actually differentiated the different tiers of bosses. In this virtual reality game, the names of the NPCs no longer hovered above their heads. Naturally, a new way was needed to differentiate the tiers of the bosses. It did not seem appropriate to carve 'Big Boss', 'Mini Boss', 'Henchman' onto the faces of monsters; in the end, the developers decided to display the differences through their outward appearances.

The Mountain Bandit before Gu Fei was just a Henchman, which was weaker compared to a Mini Boss or a Big Boss.

Gu Fei was a little excited as this was his first time encountering and fighting a Henchman after grinding for so long.

Unfortunately, a Henchman still lacked the ability to provide Gu Fei with his much desired excitement and thrill.

In the strictest sense, a Henchman was not considered a real boss. It was just an ordinary monster that had been bestowed with better attack, defense, and health. Real bosses would actually have flashy entrances when appearing in front of players, clad in golden armors or godly attires. Their looks alone would leave the players humbled. Bosses were NPCs with powerful skills, great equipment, high level, and impressive AI. Compared to a real boss, a Henchman was nothing but a mook.

With Gu Fei's peak control that allowed him to deliver maximum damage every strike, it was only a matter of time before the current mook was taken care of. Unfortunately, Gu Fei was lacking in Strength and all his equipment was common grade. While he could still deal with regular monsters in a jiffy, the enhanced version of monsters proved to be a little more tedious. This particular scrimmage required a few more minutes before the Henchman finally collapsed on the floor.

Gu Fei could clearly hear the Henchman mumble something

before it collapsed, “The key to the secret path... I will never give it to anyone!”

“What key?” Gu Fei asked instinctively.

But the monster was dead. And even if it were still alive, it would not reply to a player’s question unless it was programmed to.

Gu Fei looted the Henchman thoroughly. Besides it producing a larger pile of coins compared to regular monsters, there was a heavy metal key as well. Upon a closer look, a message was displayed. [The key to Oolong Cave’s secret pathway.]

But where is the secret path? Gu Fei looked around him, and headed toward the dark area where the Henchman had appeared from.

Although it was very dark, Gu Fei did not feel that it was a hardship since he had a few torches with him.

He killed quite a number of those groups of Vagabonds by the campfire near a lake back then. Aside from looting a bundle of meat-carving knives from them, Gu Fei acquired a lot of items for setting up fire as well. Unfortunately, Gu Fei was just a Mage and there was a weight limit to how much he could carry. His Doraemon’s dimensional pocket was not unlimited in size after all. Of course, he did not plan to loot every meat-carving knife a monster dropped. Just having some was enough. And being the boy scout that he was, he had kept a few torches with him just in case he needed them in the future. His location right now was exactly where a torch would come in handy.

Gu Fei was grateful that he had anticipated something like this back then. He casually took a torch out of his pocket and lit it up.

The torch lit up the darkness. Gu Fei noticed a large iron plate on the ground instantly. A latch at the end was fastened together by a giant padlock which was currently bolted. Gu Fei inserted the newly acquired key into the padlock and turned the key, resulting

in a loud clicking noise as the padlock was unlocked. He removed the padlock and lifted the iron plate on the ground, revealing a hole which could only fit a single person at a time. Gu Fei directed his torch into the hole, and what he saw was a tunnel around the height of a single person.

Gu Fei promptly sent Sword Demon a message, but all he received was a system notification. [Message reception is off.]

Well, it was only natural for Sword Demon et al. to turn off their message reception, for they did not wish to be interrupted when undergoing intensive battles. They were all standing close to one another anyway, so if there was anything to say they could just shout it directly.

Maybe I should just wait till the mission is successfully carried out... Gu Fei closed the iron plate, but he hesitated when he went back to the main passageway.

The monsters, which were taken care of by Sword Demon and company, had already respawned in front of the cave.

These monsters would not actually cause much difficulty for Gu Fei, seeing as they were only level 35. But the thing was, unlike Sword Demon and the others, Gu Fei was not that knowledgeable regarding information like the positions of the monsters or the range of the monsters' aggro. If Gu Fei proceeded alone now, he might just have to defeat all the previous monsters again. In other words, it was troublesome.

"Just my luck I guess!" Gu Fei sighed and went back to lift the iron plate open again.

Who knows? I might surprise those people by arriving there ahead of them! Gu Fei went down the tunnel with a slight urge for mischief.

The hidden tunnel was cramped, but it was much easier to walk on compared to the rocky pathway of the cave. Gu Fei lifted his

torch high in the air as he remained mindful of any traps.

Surprisingly, it was smooth sailing till the end of the tunnel where a huge stone door loomed before Gu Fei. The stone door grudgingly opened as he pushed it with all his might. Though, Gu Fei felt as if the door wanted to crush him to his death as it pushed back against him. With much effort, he finally wedged himself through the small opening and entered. The door closed by itself when Gu Fei stopped pushing once he fully got through to the other side. Gu Fei tried pushing the door from the side now that he was inside, but the door would not even budge. Maybe it needed to be pulled instead of pushed? Unfortunately, Gu Fei did not think it was possible as he had already turned all sweaty from just pushing the door. He started to ponder about adding stat points to Strength in the future now that he was feeling dissatisfied with his lack of power.

Gu Fei looked around and saw a wide, empty area as he left the stone door.

It was a surprise to find such a flat and spacious area inside a cave. Within a split second, Gu Fei noticed the small hut situated among the leveled open space.

“Sooto is in a small hut situated inside the deeper parts of Oolong Cave... Although there’s plenty of space outside the hut...” Gu Fei recalled Young Master Han’s words when he was briefing them about the mission.

I actually reached the targeted location first... The secret path is actually the shortcut for this mission! Gu Fei was overjoyed by this, Since there’s nobody around, maybe I should... Gu Fei clasped his sword, and slowly approached the small hut.

As for the strategy set up by Young Master Han, Gu Fei had nothing but admiration for him; Gu Fei witnessed all of their excellent teamwork with his eyes. If everything was carried out exactly like how Young Master Han had planned, the risks

involved would only be minimal.

However, admiring something did not necessarily mean fondness! What Gu Fei really craved was a face-to-face combat.

Luring the monsters, trapping the monsters, attracting the monsters' aggro; Gu Fei was familiar with these terms as he had heard them regularly as well. These were aspects that showed just how skillful an online gaming expert was. But Gu Fei was different. It was true that he wanted to be a prominent expert in the game, but he wished to achieve that by relying on his kung fu and not by relying on some online gaming skills. This was his purpose for playing Parallel World.

Gu Fei had only dealt with regular monsters all these time, and he had always been wishing for an opportunity to face a challenging mob boss to test his limits. It seemed the opportunity had finally arrived.

Missions that required players to fight a boss were hard to come by. The system released a list of missions on random every day. There were countless item-finding or delivery missions for the players to choose from, but it was rare to actually come across a challenging top-tier mission. Even if the players managed to come across one, they would still need luck to actually receive the mission as theirs. This was why a player or an employer was willing to spend big bucks to hire others to help with the mission.

Now that I think about it, joining this mercenary group isn't that bad. The harder the missions, the more chances I have to face greater challenges.

Gu Fei arrived outside the small hut as he was still lost in his thoughts.

The NPC within the hut was the exact same one whose head was needed to accomplish the mercenary mission. Of course, Gu Fei did not even bother to knock on the door and greet. He busted the door down with a flying kick and yelled, "Sooto!"

It appeared that this was also a way to attract the monster's aggro. The person lying on the bed immediately bounced up and rushed toward Gu Fei after retrieving his huge knife from the side of the bed.

Gu Fei brandished his sword and sprang forward; they clashed!

"Such strength!" Gu Fei managed to block the attack, but he could not withstand the force behind it and was blown away.

Sooto roared and charged out of his hut.

Gu Fei's face turned pale. He recalled Young Master Han saying, "Sooto will whistle for his lackeys once he exits his hut."

Chapter 21 - Sooto, the Mountain Bandit Leader

Sure enough, Sooto shoved two fingers into his mouth and blew air through them as he charged outside.

Gu Fei nervously checked his surroundings as a high-pitch sound pervaded the air, yet not even a monster's shadow appeared. Sootu did not seem to mind this as he headed toward Gu Fei with a large knife in hand after he was done whistling.

Sooto was a humanoid NPC with average height, muscular bare chest, and a cruel face. He fit exactly the developers' image of 'a mob boss that would be difficult to defeat.'

With his grotesque appearance, Sooto arrived in front of Gu Fei and unleashed a slash with a wave of his hand.

Gu Fei nimbly dodged the attack but did not retaliate; he did not dare clash forcefully with Sooto. Based on his observation, Sooto was the type of monster with superb speed and power. Gu Fei would have to rely on his fighting techniques to win against him.

What exactly were these 'techniques'?

Of course, it was kung fu! Kung fu allowed one to overcome powerful enemies in combat through domineering techniques.

The legendary Eighteen Arms Martial Technique, consisting of sword, spear, staff, club, axe, trident, and so on, actually referred to the fighting techniques of eighteen different types of martial arts.

Nine Blades of Tang!

This was a very offensive fighting technique that solely relied on the Tang sword. Gu Fei wielded his current longsword precisely because it resembled a real Tang sword, allowing him to apply that particular fighting technique.

Gu Fei firmly gripped the sword handle with his two hands and alertly looked at Sooto who was two meters away.

Here it comes! Gu Fei's eyes twitched as he saw Sooto lean in and shrug his shoulder blades backward.

Gu Fei sidestepped just as a bright red light narrowly swept past him. That must be the move called Red Blaze or something, Gu Fei recalled Young Master Han mentioning it; one of the advantages for trapping Sooto inside the hut was he would not be able to use this particular move.

"The move's damage is too high. Nobody could withstand it right now with the measly defensive equipment we have, even if we put all our stats to Endurance," Young Master Han said this before as well.

"Why not dodge it if we can't block?" Gu Fei asked this question back then.

"You try dodging it, then!" Young Master Han replied snappily.

Gu Fei successfully dodged the move right now; it was just a shame that Young Master Han was not around to witness it. Gu Fei's father said that fighting techniques could be summarized into eight words: "Eyes on the hands, hands on the eyes."

For a regular person, keeping up with the hand movements of the opponent with their eyes was hard enough already; keeping track of the opponent's eyes to counter the next attack was even harder.

Gu Fei was capable enough to keep up with his opponent's movements. As for countering the attacks, stat points were necessary in this game to make that possible. Gu Fei fortunately added all his points to Agility, allowing him to deal with Sooto.

Of course, all of these were possible due to Parallel World's incredible simulation. The NPCs' actions were similar to how real human beings would move. Even Red Blaze, an imaginary move made possible by the game, could only be unleashed by the NPC

Sooto if he moved his limbs in a certain way. There were signs when he would attack.

Thus, Gu Fei currently had the ability to dodge the attacks of the Mountain Bandit Leader. Since Sooto was bounded by the usual NPCs' habits where he focused on single-mindedly attacking and not on dodging, it was obvious who would win this fight.

Gu Fei's only concern was how much damage he could inflict on Sooto with his attacks.

His entire focus was on the sword in his hand. He was convinced that he could rely fully on it for this fight and did not need to use spells just yet.

The sword was just a common weapon, however. Although it was good enough to handle the regular monsters with its high damage output, Gu Fei was still worried that it might not be enough to deal with the Mountain Bandit Leader that possessed high health and defense.

But when Gu Fei managed to perform a horizontal slash – one of the moves from the three forms of Fenliu – on to Sooto's lower abdomen at the first window of opportunity, he gained a huge boost in confidence. This was because he felt quite an impact from the tip of the sword.

Previously, Sword Demon deduced how much damage Gu Fei could cause by comparing the health of a monster and the amount of attacks Gu Fei needed before he could slay it. After days of immersing himself into this game, Gu Fei could actually determine how high the damage he caused just from the sensation he felt with his hand when an attack connected.

His slash on Sooto just now undoubtedly possessed high damage. He never felt such a high damage output before even when he was fighting the usual monsters. Gu Fei felt perplexed. How was it possible that a mob boss had even lower defense than a regular monster?

After skirmishing for a few more rounds and managing to slash Sooto's left leg, Gu Fei finally understood the situation.

He was able to deal so much damage to Sooto because he was topless.

It seemed that Sooto had zero defenses for his upper body for some unknown reason. The slash Gu Fei had attempted on Sooto's left leg did not even cause any damage as he had some sort of armor on it.

Now that he understood the whole situation, Gu Fei felt at ease and struck Sooto's torso with every chance he got. As for the lower body, Gu Fei simply ignored it even when there was an opening to strike since he knew it would be useless.

Even so, the fight with Sooto lasted for a full fifteen minutes!

Although Sooto had zero upper body defense, the amount of HP he had was no joke. Gu Fei was unsure how viable Young Master Han's strategy of chipping Sooto's health away inside the hut anymore. He had learned the Repeating Fireball spell that Young Master Han mentioned, and it was not an AoE spell in the strictest sense. What it could actually do was to cause slight damage to the nearby areas indirectly targeted. So if they were to subdue Sooto according that plan... F*ck it! Forget going to work tomorrow.

With his torso riddled with wounds, Sooto's head automatically detached the moment he collapsed. The head turned into a burlap sack from the get go. Gu Fei smirked, It's a humanoid NPC after all. If we had to cut its head off after the fight... That would be very disturbing.

The words [The head of Mountain Bandit Leader] appeared when Gu Fei picked up the sack and fixed his gaze on it.

Gu Fei was actually trapped in the bottom of the cave right now. He got here by squeezing through the stone door in the secret pathway, and that door could not be opened from the inside with

just his meager strength. Sword Demon and the others were about to barge in through the main entrance any minute now. Seeing as he could not find any switch that might open the main door, he decided to just wait for the others to open it for him.

There was nothing around the area, so Gu Fei wandered into Sooto's little hut. As soon as he entered, he could hear a weak voice saying, "Who are you?"

Gu Fei was taken aback by this. The voice started to mumble on its own before he could even react properly. Gu Fei breathed a sigh of relief, NPCs usually act this way. Asking 'Who are you?' is just to draw attention to them. They'll start some mumbo jumbo to tell what's their deal; so what comes next?

"Can you help me?" the weak voice asked.

Ah, so it's a quest, Gu Fei mumbled to himself. He did not actually pay attention to the NPC's blathering. The NPC was someone who came from somewhere else to search for something. He got abducted by the Mountain Bandits, and they tortured him because he refused to submit to them. Now that he was dying, he wished for a hero's appearance, which was Gu Fei apparently, to help him accomplish some unfinished business.

Gu Fei accepted the quest without even thinking twice, It's just a quest. Nothing to lose from accepting it. I can cancel it anytime I want as well. It's fine even though I didn't hear the quest details just now. Surely, there's information about it on the official website. I can look it up whenever.

Once Gu Fei agreed to the quest, the person on the verge of dying immediately said, "Thank you! Take my emblem... Good luck!"

The dying person raised his hand toward Gu Fei, and was dead in the next instant as Gu Fei received what was in his hand.

Gu Fei lowered his head and looked at the emblem he had just received. There was no information besides the name, Eddie's

Emblem, on it.

The pop-up window, which displayed the emblem's name, glittered with golden light; only high-grade equipment would be displayed this way in Parallel World.

[Eddie's Emblem: add 6 points for all stats.]

I only accepted the quest and have not done anything, yet I already received such a powerful item? What kind of quest is this? Gu Fei was astonished. To be frank, equipment which added 6 points for every stat was inferior compared to something like Frost Memories, which boosted 25 points for a stat. It was true that the total point boosted by Eddie's Emblem was 5 points more than Frost Memories, but nobody would actually distribute points evenly among all the stats. From the perspective of players who wanted to strengthen the stats which were more advantageous to their job class, Eddie's Emblem was not particularly helpful.

However, it was still equipment with golden lettering after all. Its very existence hinted at how special the quest probably was. Even Gu Fei, who had no real interest in questing, was now a little more keen on the quest. He immediately opened his quest log, and saw a new quest on the list: [Eddie's Mission].

[Eddie, who embarked on a journey to accomplish his quest, had unfortunately fallen into the hands of the Mountain Bandits. Can you accomplish this quest on his behalf?]

This was the only information mentioned on the quest description page. The quests in Parallel World were all like this; the quest details were actually heard directly from NPCs. The quest log would only list the name of a quest without any accompanying hints or details. That was why players carried little notebooks with them when they were handling quests; they would crazily jot down details as soon as the NPCs started talking!

Gu Fei pinned the emblem on his chest. But he tucked it back inside his mage robe once he looked down his chest and saw just

how unsightly it was. The emblem was considered to be an accessory item, and it would be in effect as long as it was not stuffed inside the players' dimensional pocket. Gu Fei could feel himself getting stronger already. Every stat received a boost of 6 points... It was as if he leveled up six times since he received a total of 30 points!

Oh, yeah. Who knows what kind of treasure Sooto might still be hiding. I should go look around some more, Gu Fei began searching around as he thought of this.

At the same time elsewhere, Sword Demon and the rest had reached the last line of defense of the enemies.

A Mini Boss was guarding the door, and a lot of Mountain Bandits were in the surroundings as well. It was pretty troublesome as it took every ounce of them to wipe out all these monsters. War Without Wounds, who was in charge of attracting the aggro from the monsters, was nearly annihilated. Luckily, Sword Demon was there to block the attack for him in the nick of time. Young Master Han's MP was close to empty, so he was unable to help at that time. Only a veteran like Sword Demon noticed that War Without Wounds was in a dire state.

All were busily patching themselves up as the battles ended. Young Master Han and Royal God Call fought with long-ranged attacks so they still seemed to be composed, but the other three were already in a sorry state.

"Alright," Young Master Han consoled everyone, "The hard part is over. The next battle is just a matter of repeating the same strategy over and over again. The monsters here will respawn in five minutes, so let's all take a good rest and replenish our HP. Miles, we are all counting on you later—"

"Miles?" Young Master Hand turned around, only to see the employer standing behind them with a puzzled look.

"Where's Thousand Miles Drunk?" Young Master Han looked

around.

Chapter 22 - Issue

Everyone was dumbfounded. They barely had time to pay attention to the two stragglers as they were busy killing the monsters. All Gu Fei and the employer had to do was follow the path they had cleared, so there was no need to protect Gu Fei even if he was a weak Mage.

“Where is he?” Young Master Han stared at the employer.

“He went ahead and engaged the monster we accidentally attracted to let me escape,” he replied.

That was to be expected. Although considering how long it was, it was abnormal for him to not have caught up to them by now. Gu Fei would be in no way slower than their group who had to keep clearing the monsters in front.

“Perhaps the monsters along the way had respawned by the time he finished fending off the initial aggressor?” Brother Assist suggested.

The path, which required the concerted effort of five pros to clear, was not something a single Mage could handle alone.

“I’ll send him a message!” Seeing that the exquisite face of Young Master Han had turned ashen, Sword Demon immediately sent a message to Gu Fei. If what Brother Assist said was true, the five had no choice but to turn back to get him. The experience they had thus far was already exhausting; turning back right now would only leave the team annoyed and filled with grievances. It would also make teaming up in the upcoming battles awkward and tense.

Everyone stared at Sword Demon disparagingly. They suddenly saw his eyes widened as he sent a series of messages before finally walking over to the lever on his accord and activating the stone door.

The stone door slowly lifted up with a grinding sound.

And there stood Gu Fei, slowly being revealed to everyone behind the door.

Gu Fei held on to a longsword not fit for a Mage in his left hand and a sack in his right hand. A light smile hung across his face as he looked at the rest of the group and delightedly exclaimed, "Took you guys long enough!"

They were speechless as they stared at him stupidly. Gu Fei walked out from the door as he threw the sack he was holding toward the employer's arms while saying, "Here's what you wanted."

The employer caught it and was taken aback as he looked into the sack.

Young Master Han and the rest were very surprised and speechless before Sword Demon broke the silence, "What happened?"

"I found a secret passageway a while back. All of you had left without a trace, so I took that path which led me to the lair. I ended up killing Sooto, and now I brought his head here," Gu Fei said.

"How did you kill him?" Young Master Han's face was still frozen in disbelief.

Gu Fei flourished his blade and pointed it at Young Master Han.

"How is that possible?!" Young Master Han said as he raised his hand and flicked the blade aside, heading inside as the rest of them followed closely.

The body of the now headless Sooto lay on the ground. Young Master Han had encountered Sooto once, so he asked, "Why is Sooto topless?"

Everyone looked at him oddly. To be honest, anyone would suspect Young Master Han's sexual orientation given how he looked.

Young Master Han did not bother addressing the group as he simply continued to mutter, “He wasn’t like this when I was here last time!”

Gu Fei shrugged to indicate he did not know the answer as well, only saying, “Well, all I know is that he wasn’t wearing any armor.”

“Oh... So that’s it!” Everyone gained some sort of understanding.

The way they saw it, a Mage’s damage would be astonishingly high if the opponent had no armor of any sort. Mages excelled in long-ranged attacks and Sooto only possessed close-combat capabilities besides his special attack. Gu Fei must have used some unknown method to immobilize Sooto without him getting close and slowly whittled his health away.

Although they could see Sooto’s body marred with slashes, they just assumed that Gu Fei might have inflicted all those wounds after Sooto had died. He even carried that longsword in order to maintain the charade and prevent others from learning his unique fighting style as a Mage.

They all had such thoughts except for Sword Demon who stared at Sooto’s corpse in a trance.

“Where’s the secret passage you mentioned?” Young Master Han asked. Since they thought Gu Fei was trying to hide his fighting style, these pros were polite enough to brush the matter aside.

“Over here,” Gu Fei beckoned them to a corner.

Fortunately, the stone door could be pushed aside by combining the strength of everyone. Gu Fei happily said, “We should leave this way. We won’t have to fight any monsters on the way again!”

These pros were a little morose at the moment, quietly following Gu Fei and using the secret passageway.

The Henchman with the key to the secret path from before did not respawn when they got to the exit and pushed open the iron

plate covering the surface. They were not far from the cave entrance so they exited the cave in no time.

“Quest complete!” Young Master Han declared.

The employer nodded his head and proceeded to retrieve the money pouch from his pocket without another word.

Young Master Han received it and took a peek before nodding his head, “It’s the right amount. As for what you promised before, I hope you will honor the agreement.”

The employer nodded as his face expressed immense excitement, “Of course, I will. Your mercenary group’s strength is truly remarkable! It wasn’t till now that I made sense of the entire situation.”

“What do you mean?” Young Master Han asked.

The employer laughed, “You don’t have to keep me out of the loop anymore. The plan was to feign an attack on the front while striking for real in the back right? You used the rest of the group to control the influx of bandits while you let Miles bro here use the secret passageway to solo the boss. You previously mentioned how Sooto would summon his fellow bandits. But since all of you were engaging the enemies by the main entrance, the summoned monsters had no way to enter, which gave Miles bro the perfect setting to solo-kill the boss! He he he! To think you would even act like you’re clueless about the secret passageway... There’s no need for that; I won’t reveal your strategy. Even if I reveal it, how many of them out there can solo-kill a boss like Miles bro here?” as he said all this, the employer showed a face of immense admiration toward Gu Fei.

“What are you saying?” Gu Fei was at a loss.

“Heh! Nothing. Absolutely nothing. If I have any other issues in the future, I’ll definitely look for you guys. I’ll take my leave first!” The employer flashed a thumbs-up toward Gu Fei as he turned to

descend the mountain.

“What’s he talking about?” Gu Fei asked the crowd of pros before him.

They were all left rather embarrassed. Young Master Han cleared his throat, “Ahem. Did you manage to get anything good from taking down Sooto?”

“Nothing at all!” Gu Fei said, “I did find two money pouches from his hut though,” Gu Fei took them out and handed it over to Young Master Han.

Young Master Han was stunned for a bit before he finally took it and waved his arms at the rest, “Let’s go back and split the reward.”

They all replied in agreement, yet they sounded listless. This was not the usual reaction people would have when talking about splitting rewards.

Ray’s Bar had seemed to become this bunch’s rendezvous point. All were subdued as they got back to Yunduan City and made their way over.

Ray was already accustomed to their presence and he pointed them toward an empty room.

They entered and got seated. Young Master Han reached into his pocket and the three money pouches with the gold coins were emptied on the table. This pile of gold coins could be viewed as an enormous fortune already, considering that most players were still barely making a few dozen silver coins.

“Let’s hear it from everyone how we should split all these,” Young Master Han said.

Nobody said a thing. If it was up to Gu Fei, he would have wanted to have it distributed equally and be done with. However, he had no idea if there were any unspoken rules of sort among online gaming pros so he decided to keep his mouth shut. As for the rest

of them, they were hesitating on whether they should take the coins or not since Gu Fei's actions of sneaking in through a secret pathway and soloing Sooto had rendered what they did worthless in comparison.

“Say something! Why are you all so quiet?!” Young Master Han had no idea as well, pushing the difficult conundrum to everyone.

“Let's split these equally!” Brother Assist spoke. Young Master Han was surprised. While some of them seemed as if they did not contribute much, they nevertheless expended quite a bit of effort and time. No one would be willing to just hand over all the gold to Gu Fei, but it was somewhat shameless to ask for an equal distribution. He had not expected anyone here to be thick-skinned enough to actually suggest it in this case. They were all renowned online gaming pros after all! While they were all skilled, it was necessary to be gracious with everyone.

Upon hearing Brother Assist's suggestion, Gu Fei sighed in relief. In the end, it was an equal distribution! He immediately agreed, “Yes, let's do that!”

Everyone could see that Gu Fei's words and actions were not done in mockery and immediately livened up. This was a huge reward in any case.

In the end, it still fell on to Young Master Han to divide the pile into six portions before finally grabbing a few coins from each portion and creating a somewhat bigger pile that he pushed toward Gu Fei, “You should get more since you put in the most effort with that solo kill.”

“Is that so? I'll take it!” Gu Fei was not being modest at all and extended his hand to collect the pile into his dimensional pocket. Once he was done, he patted his robe and got up, “Alright, I'm leaving!”

“Leaving? Where to?” They were shocked.

“Offline, of course! I’ve still got work tomorrow!” Gu Fei said.

“Oh! Go ahead then!” They had no idea what else to say.

“See you later!” Gu Fei waved to the group, and coolly turned away. He was really logging off, only it was not for work tomorrow. Gu Fei was definitely not like the average player who spent his whole day in the game. Every morning, afternoon, and night, he would practice his kung fu, never once missing a session. It was just about the time for him to go practice and limber up his body.

Gu Fei left as the five pros stared blankly. None of them made the first move to take their respective share of coins off the table.

Once again, it was Young Master Han who first made a move, smiling toward Brother Assist as he played with a gold coin, “Brother Assist, you’re really something else!”

“What?”

“I found it somewhat awkward to suggest an equal distribution. That was so unlike you,” Young Master Han’s words had a hint of ridicule in them.

Brother Assist returned his smile, “Are you teasing me? I honestly thought it wasn’t that overboard to ask for equal distribution!”

“Oh?”

“It’s like what that guy said earlier. I think it was really because we were clearing the monsters by the entrance that resulted in Sooto having no additional bandits to support him, giving Gu Fei the opportunity to solo the Mountain Bandit Leader.”

Young Master Han thought about it for a while and nodded, “You’re right. That fight was quite hectic. I even thought it was the system respawning additional monsters. In retrospect, it was actually the additional bandits that Sooto called for that we ended up blocking as they tried to make their way over. How fortunate

that I healed so perfectly, or else we would have been wiped out! Ha ha ha ha!”

Everyone’s expression changed. They all regarded Sword Demon with great respect, seeing how difficult it was to be partnered with this sort of person.

“Yeah, so I didn’t think equal distribution is too much. It’s just a little bit more... You gave him a little extra at the end right?” Brother Assist immediately said.

“Indeed, that makes sense! Let’s all take our reward!” Young Master Han called out. All took their portion into their pockets, yet the atmosphere was still the same as before.

The money issue was nothing more than a trifle to these pros. What left them contemplative was that there existed a player who did something none of them could accomplish.

They were all thinking of the same thing and could only come away with a forced smile, Soloing a boss? Even if the boss was naked and without any armor at all, let alone just topless, there’s no way I could do that!

Chapter 23 - The Joy of Helping

Players were still required to go to the designated safe zones to log off. So after Gu Fei left Ray's Bar, he quickly headed to a safe zone.

On his way there, he passed by the Hall of Guild Creation and found many people coming and going. Now that most players had finally reached level 30, guilds were being formed like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. A few days ago, Fireball had asked about Gu Fei's preparation to join any particular guild. When he saw Gu Fei's disinterest in the matter, Fireball could only drop the question and conscientiously choose a guild on his own.

Has Fireball found a guild yet? Gu Fei asked in his heart as he pulled up his friends list and saw that Fireball was offline. Fireball had a rather irregular online schedule, so it was rather hard to keep track of his activities in-game. As he was pondering on this, he accidentally collided with someone.

Gu Fei staggered a bit. He really could not stand his weak physique in-game. Thankfully, he had equipped Eddie's Emblem; without the extra 6 stat points to Strength and Endurance, he might have been knocked flat on the ground.

"It's you!" Gu Fei raised his head and recognized the person who had bumped into him. It was Xi Xiaotian.

"Shh!" Xi Xiaotian motioned him to be quiet, "Help me!" With that, she hid behind Gu Fei's body. Hiding the lady's slim figure from view was pretty easy with his body frame that was toughened by kung fu.

Just as Gu Fei was about to ask her what was going on, he saw a little girl hurriedly rush from an alley. After looking around and only seeing Gu Fei, she stared at him and asked, "Hey, have you seen a woman pass through here?"

Kids nowadays are so rude! Gu Fei furrowed his brows. The Gu household was a wushu family that preserved many old traditions. They were naturally stricter in observing proper etiquette compared to the regular households. There were not many restrictions or rules to follow in the family but respecting the elders and teachers was one social propriety everyone in the Gu household rigorously adhered to. Hence, younger people were expected to respectfully greet their elders at any given opportunity, even in the wee hours or when they just woke up.

“Hey, I’m talking to you!” the little girl shouted once more when she saw Gu Fei not responding.

It was hard to have a good impression of the kid, but Gu Fei still understood her feelings. She must have been duped by this scammer! So he nodded his head, “Yes, I have.”

“Where did she run off to?” the girl anxiously inquired.

Gu Fei sidestepped, raised his hand, and pointed toward the person behind him, “She’s right here!”

“Arghh!” Xi Xiaotian staggered forward. She had leaned on to Gu Fei’s back as she was trying to reduce her visible areas. Gu Fei’s sudden movement had forced her to lose her footing.

Gu Fei stared at Xi Xiaotian icily, but the little girl had unexpectedly rushed forward and helped Xi Xiaotian up, “Sister Tian, are you alright?”

Hearing how the brat addressed Xiaotian, Gu Fei realized he had misunderstood the situation.

Xi Xiaotian angrily glared at Gu Fei before she smiled at the little brat, “I’m fine.”

The little girl stared at Gu Fei and could vaguely tell something was up, so she asked once more, “Sister Tian, what were you doing?”

“Kitty, I just couldn’t agree with your request,” Xi Xiaotian

replied.

“But we really couldn’t find anyone else!” the brat said.

“Just wait a little longer. I’m sure you’ll find someone eventually,” Xi Xiaotian bargained.

“Please! You have to help us!” the brat pulled Xi Xiaotian’s hand, shaking it as she pleaded.

Xi Xiaotian stubbornly shook her head and remained silent. Gu Fei could not help but interject, “Just help them already!”

Xi Xiaotian rolled her eyes, “You don’t know anything, so shut up and mind your own business!”

Gu Fei shrugged at the kid, showing his inability to help. He then proceeded to head toward the safe zone.

He had not walked for more than ten meters before he heard someone hollering from behind him, “Hey, wait a second!” Gu Fei turned his head and saw Xi Xiaotian rushing toward him.

“What?” Gu Fei asked.

“I know you’re the kind of person that loves helping people, so why not help them?” Xi Xiaotian said.

“With what?” Gu Fei asked.

“She’s asking me to help them make up the required number to nominate their guild,” Xi Xiaotian said.

“That’s it? Then why don’t you help them?” Gu Fei retorted.

“Me? Hey... You know what sort of person I am. Having any form of relations with me is problematic,” Xi Xiaotian explained.

“That’s true! I guess helping them will BE meaningful based on what you said. It would spare them the trouble of being dragged down by your existence,” Gu Fei said.

“Uh-huh. You must definitely join something so meaningful!”

“I refuse,” Gu Fei said.

“Why?” Xi Xiaotian was curious.

“You can’t fool me. You only need twenty people to nominate for a guild. Taking into account the number of players in Parallel World, hitting that target is very simple. Why would there be an issue with finding twenty people?” Gu Fei scoffed.

“She’s right there. You can ask her if you don’t believe me,” Xi Xiaotian was helpless.

Gu Fei regarded her with suspicion before walking toward the girl, “Are you guys short of people to nominate your guild?”

The brat nodded her head, “Yup! We searched for so long, and we are now just one person short.”

“Is it that difficult to find just one person?” Gu Fei couldn’t make sense of this.

“Yes! That’s why we must ask Sister Tian to help us,” the girl replied earnestly.

“It’s settled, Kitty,” Xi Xiaotian laughed, “Let’s go over there right now!”

“Really?!” the little girl bounced excitedly, looking gratefully toward Gu Fei, “Thank you!”

“It’s nothing really,” Gu Fei said.

“Let’s go!” the girl happily bounced toward the Hall of Guild Creation.

“Let’s!” Xi Xiaotian nudged Gu Fei and chased after the girl.

The Hall of Guild Creation was filled with people; the noise made conversing difficult as everyone was shouting to attract people.

“Four Pathways Guild! We’ve accomplished all kinds of quests before. Please come and help nominate!”

“Babe, come join our Xiaoke Guild. There’re weekly wages!”

“Home of the Warriors! Our Guild Leader is a level 30 Warrior.

Those who love the Warrior job class should come and nominate!”

Hearing all these touting and shouting had led Gu Fei to believe Xiaotian’s words firmly. Although there are many people in Parallel World, getting twenty people to nominate a guild doesn’t seem easy. Maybe that’s the reason why Fireball has a hard time finding a guild.

“There’re too many people here. Kitty, go to Xiaoqi’s side and we’ll go to the nomination spot. Once we are there, I’ll message you and let Xiaoqi accept the nomination,” Xi Xiaotian said to the girl.

The girl nodded and headed toward the other side of the building. Xi Xiaotian dragged Gu Fei toward the other direction.

There were even more people cramped near the nomination spot. The people who came here to nominate guilds were treated like prey by those soliciting players. Gu Fei’s appearance had already resulted into several people coming over to attempt to poach him, “Brother, what’s your level now? Come join our guild!”

“Nominate us, nominate us!” Someone came from the right as well.

“Don’t you dare poach him!” Xi Xiaotian swiftly displayed her vulgar self, “He’s mine! Don’t you dare take him!” She grabbed Gu Fei and headed toward the nomination window in a huff.

The game had certain facilities deliberately created to not be contextually jarring for the ease of the players. The nomination spot, for example, equipped a touch user interface. While this by and large clashed against the design of the game, there were simply no other alternatives.

As they queued up, Xi Xiaotian sent off a message once they had reached the touchscreen interface and nodded toward Gu Fei, “Alright. Go ahead and nominate.”

“What’s the name of the guild?” Gu Fei had already touched the

search bar.

“Amethyst Rebirth,” Xi Xiaotian said.

Gu Fei entered the name and saw it truly had been nominated by nineteen people, with one person short of the required number to officially create the guild. He went ahead and nominated it himself.

Ding! The system notification sound rang in his ear as Gu Fei received a series of system messages.

[Amethyst Rebirth Guild has been created successfully.]

[Player Thousand Miles Drunk is now a member of Amethyst Rebirth Guild.]

[Please refer to the relevant guild tab with regard to guild matters.]

....

“Done!” Gu Fei said and turned around, yet all he saw was Xi Xiaotian hurriedly squeezing through the crowd with great effort.

Oh, no! Instantly, a sense of ominous foreboding filled his heart as Gu Fei chased after her while he shouted for her to stop.

Sadly, his effort was for naught. Although Gu Fei was agile, he had no way of displaying his nimbleness in this crowd of people. He could only stare at Xi Xiaotian slowly disappear into the sea of humans.

“What are you up to?!” Gu Fei pulled out his friends list and fired off a message.

“Nothing! It’s a good thing!” Xi Xiaotian said.

“Explain yourself!” Gu Fei said.

“You’ll understand when you open up your guild tab and take a look!” Xi Xiaotian replied.

Gu Fei opened the guild tab as he forcefully squeezed ahead.

All the guild members' level and job class were clearly listed before his eyes. There were all sorts of job classes. As for levels... They were not very high; there were only two level 30 members. Gu Fei's name was actually ranked on top. Meaning, he was the member with the most experience earned. It was at this moment that Gu Fei felt stunned.

The column that showed the gender of the players had displayed a row of 'female' besides Gu Fei's 'male'. From number two all the way to twenty, there was a total of nineteen 'female'.

This guild... Why were there only women?

At this moment, a series of “Player X would like to add you as a friend” message notifications resounded unceasingly. A quick sweep of all these requests of friendship made him realize that they were all names from the guild.

The first message read, “Who are you? How did you get into our guild?!”

Sender: [July](#)

A new character; just to avoid any confusion in the future chapters, 'Xiaoqi' and 'July' are the same person. 小七 (Xiaoqi) is the nickname for 七月 (July).

Chapter 24 - Amethyst Rebirth

“Come out! We’re outside the Hall of Guild Creation!” July sent another message.

Gu Fei sighed and squeezed his way toward the entrance. He did not wish to admit it, but he had fallen into Xi Xiaotian’s scheme once more. Although it was difficult to judge if this was a good or bad thing, Gu Fei nevertheless did not enjoy the feeling of being duped.

Gu Fei immediately identified the person who had called him out upon leaving the Hall of Guild Creation.

A group of women could be seen gathered around a corner of the eastern wall of the Hall of Guild Creation. Once Gu Fei stepped off the premise a hand immediately shot out to point at him. It was the little brat Xi Xiaotian had called Kitty. “That’s him!” the kid yelled.

The girls turned their heads in unison; their eyes staring straight at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei immediately counted six people in their group. He should have no issues handling that much if it came down to a fight, so he stood at where he was with a calm expression.

The six standing next to one another walked toward Gu Fei. Having the attention of six women should have been something to be proud of, but Gu Fei’s heart squeezed and hands became sweaty instead. This was because he could feel killing intent emanating from them.

There were many players passing by that stopped on their tracks and looked at Gu Fei enviously. They carefully examined the six ladies. They became even more mad with envy when they realized that the six were all outstanding beauties.

All the male players swallowed their saliva and audible gulps

escaped when the six ladies walked up to Gu Fei.

“Thousand Miles Drunk?” asked the girl with a petite frame and short hair standing right in the middle of the six as she stared at him.

Gu Fei nodded his head. He immediately felt a sense of closeness to this short haired lady. Though, it was not because of some romantic feelings and instead was due to her equipment. Gu Fei could tell from a single glance that the lady had a Fighter job class. This was the job class that Gu Fei wanted the most at the beginning. Alas, he did not become a Fighter due to a twist of fate. After he got into the game, he found out there were lesser players who chose the Fighter job class as compared to the other classes. Apparently, it was due to the difficulty of maintaining particular body postures when the players tried to execute certain moves or skills. Many players who chose the job class found it to be physically demanding. Thus, the newer players who had heard about this avoided it on purpose. Now that Gu Fei finally had the chance to meet a player that chose to be a Fighter, he could barely hold back his excitement. Gu Fei assumed that anyone who chose this job class must be a kung-fu lover like himself.

“I’m July,” the lady introduced herself.

“Hello,” Gu Fei nodded in response.

“I’m the Guild Leader of Amethyst Rebirth.”

“So I see,” Gu Fei said.

“Could I trouble you to explain to us how all of this happened and how you ended up in our guild?” July said icily.

“Well... I was a little confused by this at first. But I think I somewhat understand what has happened now. I will need her to explain as well in order for everyone to get the whole picture,” Gu Fei pointed at Kitty.

July looked at Kitty as Kitty looked intently at Gu Fei as well.

“Xi Xiaotian said you guys were short of one person to nominate your guild and needed my help to do so,” Gu Fei began.

“We were missing one because we have very strict requirements with regard to our guild members,” July explained.

Gu Fei recalled the guild member list having nineteen 'female' in the gender column and nodded his head, “Yes, I saw.” He then looked at Kitty, “What did Xi Xiaotian say to you?”

Kitty stared at him as she said, “That she promised to join a friend’s guild so she couldn’t join ours, and that the friend is you.”

Gu Fei recalled what had happened back then and said, “She told you she needed to inform me about not wanting to join my guild in order to join yours. So you thanked me when she brought me back because you assumed that I didn’t make things difficult for her and allowed her to join your guild; am I right?”

Kitty nodded her head.

“As for me, I thought Xi Xiaotian was helping her to convince me to nominate for your guild, so she thanked me.” Gu Fei addressed the six ladies, “Is everything clear now? It was a misunderstanding orchestrated by her.”

“That d*mn Xiaotian!” July stamped her feet.

“Afterward, she got rid of Kitty to prevent her from seeing me doing the nomination. I don’t know how she found a loophole that allowed a male player to join your guild,” Gu Fei said.

July sighed, “There’s no way to verify the identity of a nominator for a guild. We would normally close the guild’s nomination, and would only temporarily open it when we found a suitable candidate. This is to prevent random people from nominating themselves in.”

“I see,” Gu Fei sighed.

All the ladies looked at one another and could not help but

complain about Xi Xiaotian's actions. But all they did was grumble and did not actually show real hatred toward her, so Gu Fei was puzzled. The ladies gathered and whispered a distance away from Gu Fei. Seeing that it was no longer his problem and that it was rather late, he quickly made his way to the safe zone to log off.

The ladies discussed for a while and finally came to a decision.

"Hey, that... Eh? Where is he?" July turned and was ready to speak to Gu Fei, only to find that he had already disappeared without saying goodbye.

"Where did he go?" July pulled open her friends list and it showed Thousand Miles Drunk was offline.

"What's with that guy?! Who leaves before finishing a conversation?!" July angrily stamped her feet once more and the rest began their tirade against Gu Fei this time.

"Achooo!" Gu Fei, who had gone offline and rushed to the rooftop to practice his kung fu, suddenly sneezed. Just who is mocking me behind my back? Gu Fei wondered as he thought of the old wives' tale about sneezing.

When he logged in the next day, Gu Fei's message notification immediately lit up. He opened his inbox and saw that it was from July, "WRU WRU WRU WRU WRU WRU WRU!" A series of seven 'WRU' showed how much regard she had for the number seven.

"What do you want?" Gu Fei replied.

"What's wrong with you? You left without waiting for us to finish our conversation!" July lamented.

"Was there anything else?" Gu Fei asked.

"Come here and we'll talk," July replied.

"Where?"

"Unit B17 on Charlotte Street!"

Yunduan City might not be as big as a metropolis, but navigating

around it was still hard. This was because the city was unlike the ones in traditional MMORPGs where players could walk from the east gate to the west gate in just two or three steps. The towns were already big enough that it required name for streets to differentiate between roads. There were many for-sale houses lining up the streets as well, whereas the area the system occupied was actually just a small corner.

Unit B17 on Charlotte Street. Wonder who opened another shop, Gu Fei thought to himself as he headed to the street.

In online games, a player's level decided how the economic market flourished. As more and more players got to transom of level 30, a hodge-podge of industrial occupations, such as smelting, weaving, mining, planting, etc., began popping up in-game. While a majority of players chose to carry big sacks and sold their wares right off the streets, a sizable portion of the pay-to-win players went ahead and bought houses along the streets to convert them into shops. Thus, other than the need for street names, the numbers for different housing units came to be as well.

B17... B17... Gu Fei repeatedly muttered the unit number as he walked down the street looking for it.

When he finally spotted it, he could not help but do a double-take. The shop was unlike the others that had readable signs at a glance. This shop hung a strange picture of a diamond-shape object painted a faint purple luster where other shops would usually hung their signage. Gu Fei could not tell what it was and did not wish to risk going directly inside, so he went and knocked on the door lightly a few times instead.

The door quickly opened to reveal July as well as a few other ladies within. Gu Fei had met some of them yesterday, while the others were strangers to him.

He followed July into the house and found a seat. All the other ladies took the chance to size up Gu Fei. The expression each of

them showed varied. Many showed a look of resistance, while quite a few looked as if they could not be bothered. Embarrassingly enough, none of the ladies showed any signs of welcoming him. Even July, who was seated right across from him, seemed irritated at his presence.

“What is it you wish to talk about?” Gu Fei straightforwardly asked July. Gu Fei wanted to quickly put this matter behind him and leave, especially since he knew he was not welcomed here.

July opened her mouth but could not find the words as her face showed plenty of hesitation.

“Just be honest,” Gu Fei smiled.

“En. I thank you for helping us nominate the guild,” July started.

This was a very neutral opening, yet Gu Fei knew that this was not the main topic. He nodded his head slightly and waited for July to continue.

“You can tell the criteria we have toward our members when you look at our guild composition, right?”

Gu Fei immediately knew what she wanted to say and he was sincerely happy as he quickly interrupted her, “Don’t worry. I know what you mean. Ha ha ha ha! Alright. I’ll just remove myself from the guild and we can resolve this matter!”

Gu Fei quickly pulled up the guild tab and was about to remove himself from the guild. July’s expression changed as she shouted at him, “DON’T!”

Chapter 25 - Guild! Oh, Guild!

Everyone's eyes shot over.

Some of the ladies nimbly rushed over.

They surrounded Gu Fei instantly.

"You bastard, what do you think you're doing!" a lady bellowed as she heavily slapped the table.

Gu Fei took a look at her and felt another surge of excitement, Yet another Fighter! It was a lady whom he had met for the first time today. She was pretty good looking and had healthily tanned skin in a shade of chocolate brown. Gu Fei observed this in passing. But what truly caught his attention was that there were actually two among these ladies that chose to become a Fighter. Gu Fei began to look around and observe the others as he thought of this, hoping to find a third woman who had chosen the Fighter job class.

From the lady's perspective, Gu Fei had seemingly ignored her question, eyed her for a moment, and then turned his gaze away to look for another target. His wandering eyes were like a pair owned by a lecherous person who was trying to pick the right prey, and she was the first to be eliminated from the selections. She felt nothing but endless irritation when she looked at him. She stood up promptly, blocking Gu Fei's view, as she threateningly demanded, "What are you looking at, huh?"

Gu Fei furrowed his brows. In this day and age, such a coarse and uncouth woman could only be seen in movies. Online games sure are fertile ground for vulgarities! Gu Fei mused internally as he shook his head, "Nothing at all."

Gu Fei's look of disregard had thoroughly agitated the hot-tempered woman. She raised her fist and was about to fight with him when July shouted, "Lie Lie! It was nothing. He said he

wanted to leave the guild.”

“Ah?” The woman called Lie Lie froze for a while as she unwillingly lowered her fist. The faces of the ladies that surrounded Gu Fei had also shown varying degrees of surprise.

“What’s the matter?” Gu Fei scanned the expressions of their faces. “Am I mistaken? Don’t you all want me to leave the guild?”

The ladies felt uncomfortable upon hearing his words, some even showing a sliver of contrition. July could only express frankly what she had meant before, “You’re not mistaken. We do want you to leave the guild... But not right now.”

“What do you mean?” Gu Fei was confused.

“Do you really not know or are you playing the fool?” the prideful Lie Lie announced loudly, “Guilds have a minimum requirement of twenty players. Once a guild drops below this number, it will be disbanded.”

“Oh... Guess you all have to quickly find someone so I can leave the guild?” Gu Fei asked rhetorically. For some reason, the image of Young Master Han flashed through Gu Fei’s mind; who knew what would happen if that guy joined this guild.

The ladies all looked at one another before July finally said, “We’ll be quick about it. We just hope you’ll bear with us for the time being.”

“No problem,” Gu Fei laughed as he stood up, “Just kick me out once you find someone suitable. Are we done here? If there’s nothing else, I’ll take my leave.”

As Gu Fei stood up and walked toward the door, he felt a sense of stillness from his surroundings. He turned around and noticed the atmosphere in the room was somewhat frigid. He spied Lie Lie staring at him at that very moment, so he nodded and said, “Lie Lie. Yup, that’s a fine name!”

“What do you mean by that?!” Lie Lie’s personality was indeed as

intense as raging flames. Hearing Gu Fei's words that seemed to hint toward something deeper, she swiftly sprinted toward him. She unerringly appeared behind Gu Fei and threw her right fist at him.

Gu Fei had silently opened the door at the same instant and his body flashed out. He turned and happily said, "I'm leaving," then he closed the door behind him.

Spurring Meteor! Gu Fei silently thought to himself as he walked out on to the street. That was an attack skill from the Fighter job class. It was faster and more powerful than a normal attack and it had the added effect of Sprint.

"No matter how I look at it, Fighters are just way cooler!" Gu Fei lowered his head and studied his mage robe, feeling sorry for himself.

Back in the room after Gu Fei left, silence settled in for half a minute. The first one to recover was July who slowly made her way to the rooted Lie Lie's side and wrung her hand, "Don't be so rash next time. He may have a high level but he's still a Mage. His equipment looked pretty bad as well. Had you misjudged and your fist struck him, he would have died instantly!"

Lie Lie was startled as she turned back and looked at July, "He dodged it."

"Hmmm? What are you talking about?"

"It's as I said. He dodged my fist," Lie Lie said.

The girls promptly surrounded the two, and someone asked while everyone gabbed, "Weren't you just scaring him?"

Lie Lie laughed bitterly, "I really wanted to punch his rude a*s. I don't know how he did it, but he opened the door and dodged it."

Everyone was somewhat speechless. Having been together for quite some time, they had some idea what each of them was capable of. Lie Lie was not simply just a Fighter; she was someone

who was brave and ruthless since young. She was very adept at kicking, punching, and such ilk. Rumor had it that she even secretly went to a martial school to learn a few moves. The fact was this woman was better at fighting than most people. In the new fully immersive game, Parallel World, her speed could be seen as the fastest among all. When everyone held on to their weapons sloppily and stared at the monsters blankly, she had already ecstatically struck with her fists and feet all the monsters.

Lie Lie's level was not the highest among them at level 26. But when it came to PvP, she could easily fight four or five of them in one go. She was ecstatic with regard to this point. Gaming pros of the past might find this game to be a bad fit, but she was the opposite as she had learned some actual kicking and punching methods. She felt even more at home here since she had chosen to be a Fighter.

Couple with her character and hobby, Lie Lie did not shy away from PvP despite being a woman. What's more, she had yet to experience a loss even against opponents whose levels were higher than her. The wins she had garnered gradually made her feel that she was the world's number one expert.

Facing a Mage like Gu Fei, she was confident her punch would cause him to lose all his teeth in one blow. However, he had simply opened the door and dodged her punch without missing a beat. This sort of gesture that barely cared for her actions displayed the air of an expert.

"Lie Lie, do you think he has trained in martial arts as well?" one of the ladies asked.

"No." Lie Lie said with certainty.

"How do you know?"

"Wouldn't he have gone with a Fighter job class like me? Or at least chosen a close combat job class like Warrior or Thief. Instead, what did he choose? A Mage? Is he an idiot?" Lie Lie stated bluntly.

“Maybe he’s just honestly playing the game; unlike you who came here looking for a fight!”

Lie Lie frowned to show her disdain.

“Lie Lie, be serious for a moment. How do you think he dodged it?” July questioned.

“It was an illusion!” Lie Lie blinked her eyes intently, “It must be an illusion.”

Everyone slowly dispersed.

“B*tches, are you all looking down on me?!” Lie Lie waved her fist and rushed over. They had no intention of being on the receiving end of her attack so they streamed out of the door one by one into the streets. July watched the fleeing figures of everyone and could only laugh forcefully.

“That guy’s not bad!” a voice came from behind July.

“Xiaoluo, please don’t be smitten just because he’s a little good looking,” July spoke without even looking to see who it was.

“What, I’m being serious. Don’t you think so as well?” Xiaoluo answered.

“True. I don’t find him detestable. Somewhat friendly even,” July said.

“So there’s no need to snub him. Let’s allow him join our activities until we find his replacement!”

“Mmmm...” July gave her an ambiguous reply.

“I’ll go give this to him then!” Xiaoluo approached the table July was sitting and took an emblem.

“Hmph. Didn’t you say you’re not smitten?” July sniggered.

“I’m going to go and observe him some more before I say anything else,” Xiaoluo laughed as she left the house as well.

There were no more people around her. July laughed bitterly and

shook her head. Sweeping her gaze around the room, she proceeded to the door. Even before she closed the door, she heard a voice that suddenly came from above her, “So how was it? He’s not bad, eh?”

“Xiaotian, you’re always like this. Sooner or later, you’ll give me a fright straight to my grave,” July sighed.

“Nah. You’re already used to it!” Xi Xiaotian laid flat on the roof as she revealed her head to speak to July.

“Are you coming down?” July asked.

“Of course!” Xi Xiaotian said as she lightly landed with a flip. The house was rather tall, so Xi Xiaotian landed painfully enough that caused her to purse her lips. She quickly recovered and swept her gaze at the signage that hung the guild’s emblem. Smiling, she said, “To have your guild’s base here... Not bad.” With that, she entered the room. July was left with no choice but to follow her in and close the door behind her.

Xi Xiaotian did not take a seat. Instead, she stood by the windowsill and leaned against the wall as she asked, “So how was he? I specially came here to find out how it went.”

“Alright, stop your act. You were never that thoughtful. Did you steal someone’s belonging and have to make a run for it again?” July asked bluntly.

Xi Xiaotian laughed lightly as her left hand tossed an item over, “Here, this is for you!”

July’s arm stretched out and caught the object. She opened her hand and saw a simple ring called Wooden Ring of Wind. It was an item that boosted Agility and Strength. Fighter job class players would not give up such a magnificent support item. The price for this sort of equipment that boosted stat points would increase, especially with the increased difficulty leveling above 30 would bring. July was naturally well acquainted with the value of this

small ring. But she merely laughed lightly and casually tossed it back to Xi Xiaotian.

“What, do you not want it again?” Xi Xiaotian did not express any surprise at her choice.

July smiled without answering her.

Xi Xiaotian did not say anything as well as she returned the ring back to her pocket. She turned her head toward the window and gazed outside for a while before saying, “I know. Even if you had to pick between me and a complete stranger, you would still rather pick the latter to join the guild; am I right?”

“We are friends,” July said, “But matters concerning the guild will affect more than just my personal interest alone.”

“I know,” Xi Xiaotian laughed, “That’s what I like about you.”

“Thousand Miles Drunk... How did you know that guy?” July asked.

“He's someone I could not trick at all,” Xi Xiaotian said as she stared out the window.

“What do you mean?”

“Remember what I told you before? Professional scammers like us depend on people’s greed. No matter how intelligent they are, as long as they strongly covet something, I’ll find a way to reel them in. As for him... He got away,” Xi Xiaotian finished.

Chapter 26 - Chain Quest

Gu Fei did not put the matters regarding the guild to heart, hurriedly leaving to meet someone by the fountain square in the heart of Yunduan City.

Gu Fei could already see Fleeting Smile, who was waving his hand with a face full of smiles, from afar.

“What’s up?” Fleeting Smile immediately asked when Gu Fei came over.

“I’ve something I wish you could advise me on,” Gu Fei said.

Fleeting Smile grinned, “I am a scrupulous gaming employee, so there’s a limit to the information you can get from me.”

“Tell me what you can, and leave out what you can’t,” Gu Fei casually drawled.

“Hm. Go ahead.”

Gu Fei took out Eddie’s Emblem. Fleeting Smile casually glanced at the emblem at first and did a double-take at it the next, totally disregarding Gu Fei who was next to him in the process. The emblem was like a firefly in the pitch darkness of night, capturing his entire attention.

“Where did you get this?!” Fleeting Smile snapped back to his senses and grabbed Gu Fei’s hand as he pulled the emblem close to examine it in greater detail.

Gu Fei narrated what had happened as Fleeting Smile stood rooted to the spot.

“I went to the official website last night to have a look, yet I couldn’t find any information regarding it. So I decided to ask you. Tell me if you can, and I won’t ask further if you can’t,” Gu Fei said.

Fleeting Smile lifted his hand and pinched his own face to

confirm this was not a dream, as well as to remove the shocked expression that had settled on his face as he stood like a statue. He took a deep breath and said, “This is a quest item.”

“I know that...” Gu Fei said.

“Compared to the usual quests, this quest is quite special. We call it a chain quest,” Fleeting Smile explained.

“Chain quest?” Gu Fei felt his head becoming clear as he remembered coming across this term on the website. Compared to an ordinary quest, it was much more complicated and random.

There was a reason why it was called a chain quest. If a normal quest was formed by a single task, then putting in a number of tasks together would form a chain. Thus, it was known as a chain quest. There were many such tasks all over the game, so even an average street might contain a normal quest that could become part of a chain quest.

The system freely formed the sequence and casually placed the countless tasks of a chain quest everywhere in the game. It then proceeded to choose from the numerous plots the game had and link it toward the relevant task. The system accordingly gave a reward for the completion of a task with regard to its level of difficulty. Once a player finished a chain quest, the system would choose from another set of tasks and would sequence a new chain quest. Although the number of chain quest would never change, the content would never be repeated. While it was possible for the system to sequence an exact replica of another chain quest, the chances were infinitesimally small.

Such a design meant it was not difficult to uncover a quest chain. The various ways players could trigger the conditions were neither too strange nor too incredible. However, whether the chain quest could be successfully completed after finding it depended entirely on the player. As there were many ways a chain quest could be arranged by the system, it was entirely possible for one step to be

as simple as delivering an item and the next step to be as difficult as battling high-level monsters. Therefore, it was not improbable for players to acquire a quest chain at level 0 but only be able to accomplish the next step at an extremely high level.

The quest chain Gu Fei had picked up was actually not too difficult to trigger. It was a fairly normal quest called 'The Kidnapped Eddie' obtainable in the later stages of the game.

But the key point here was exactly that: the later stages.

A good example would be how the players handled the game with their current standards; legendary gamers like Young Master Han and Sword Demon came up with the method to kill off Sooto by trapping him in the small hut and slowly reducing his HP to 0. In actuality, the first one to be dead with that method would not be Sooto, but rather Eddie who was trapped in the corner of the hut with barely half a breath left.

There would naturally be no way to attain the quest with a dead Eddie.

There were two conditions the players must meet if they wished to keep Eddie alive and hear his dying wish.

First, Sooto must feel safe. This way, he would not feel threatened and immediately dispose of Eddie who was right beside him.

Second, Eddie must feel safe as well. This way, he would be at ease to relegate his task to the players.

There was only one way to achieve both conditions: A player would have to solo kill Sooto on his own.

Sooto would not feel threatened if there was only one opponent; only by killing Sooto would Eddie be at ease to pass his final task to a player. If it was a normal quest, Eddie would only speak his parting words. But since Gu Fei had coincidentally triggered the chain quest, Eddie's parting words became his dying will, asking

the player to carry on his unfinished business. No matter the case was, only a high level and highly skilled player would have the ability to kill Sooto alone.

Fleeting Smile had some notion of Gu Fei's ability, yet he could not help but be taken aback after hearing about what Gu Fei had just accomplished. Fleeting Smile had considered the possibility of someone like Gu Fei to bring some imbalance in-game; however, the game-breaking potential he had in mind was just limited to PvPs among the players, where individuals like Gu Fei would gain the upper hand. Never would he have thought that even the NPC bosses would not be a match for Gu Fei as well.

Fleeting Smile had tuned out even though Gu Fei was still talking. As a core member among the gaming developers, he had already been instinctively considering ways to restrict players like Gu Fei in order to maintain game balance.

"Hey! Hey!" Gu Fei's calls brought Fleeting Smile back from his thoughts again.

"What were you thinking just now?" Gu Fei questioned, "I'm asking you why the quest details weren't mentioned on the website."

"Oh..." Fleeting Smile recovered, "Chain quests are acquired by chance, so it's impossible for the site to have information on them. Players would need to find information pertaining to chain quests by themselves."

"Can't you give me a clue?" Gu Fei asked.

Fleeting Smile flashed Gu Fei a shy smile, "I am a scrupulous gaming emplo—"

"Alright, I got it!" Gu Fei was very straightforward, "Guess I'll have to search on my own. I'm off!"

"Take care!" Fleeting Smile waved.

"You, too!" Gu Fei turned and left.

Gu Fei went back to his original grinding spot after traveling for ten minutes. He had lost count of how many days he had stayed in this map ever since the experience points that was needed to level up skyrocketed once he reached level 30. A majority of players no longer solely depended on grinding monsters to level up unlike Gu Fei, as the various quests of the game would also reward the players with plenty of experience points. While it might not be as efficient as grinding monsters, at least it was not boring. Running from place to place, talking to people, and occasionally engaging in fights, questing was truly much more interactive and fun.

As for Gu Fei, he found grinding to be highly enjoyable since fighting monsters required the use of kung fu. If he had considered kung fu as boring and repetitive, he wouldn't have spent some time daily for twenty odd years practicing it, would he?

Besides, he was playing Parallel World mainly to improve his kung fu skills.

The reason for this was actually what Sword Demon had called as peak control.

Parallel World had so many monsters for Gu Fei to engage in a fight. More importantly, this was the first time he was actually able to slash or strike others without restraint after so many years of practicing kung fu.

When Gu Fei sparred with others every day in reality, he was often told to hold back. Every strike and move kung fu practitioners executed could not be fully unleashed. Although Gu Fei understood the reasoning behind this, he still could not help but feel frustrated. The real life was unlike the days of savagery and bloodlust in Jianghu described in wuxia novels, which might have been able to fill the emptiness in Gu Fei. But now, he had this online game to fill the void within him. The opponents might be unable to meet him strike for strike perfectly, but at least he no longer needed to hold back when using kung fu.

Gu Fei stretched and limbered up once he arrived in the map. He unsheathed his blade and dove straight toward the monsters.

Nice, it really was much easier to grind now!

Gu Fei knew Eddie's Emblem, which gave him 30 extra stat points, had allowed him to experience this qualitative leap in power. The monsters around him were eliminated at a faster pace than before. He felt that the current grinding spot would no longer meet his required level of difficulty, so he decided to probe higher level maps instead.

At this very moment, there was a pair of eyes not too far away intently watching Gu Fei's every move.

Fleeting Smile. He followed Gu Fei after he had left with the intention to thoroughly understand the full extent of Gu Fei's capabilities.

That speed! He put all his points to Agility... Fleeting Smile pondered in his heart. He had a better understanding of the game compared to online experts like Sword Demon due to his status as one of the higher ranked game planner. Whereas Sword Demon could tell Gu Fei had added points to Agility, Fleeting Smile was even aware of how many points he had added within a 5-point discrepancy.

There's Strength too... But I think that's probably the effect of Eddie's Emblem.

Attack power... Fleeting Smile carefully calculated the equipment Gu Fei was wearing, the inherent attack power of his character, plus the monster's defense and health total, and he inhaled sharply, "Every attack achieves the maximum damage possible... This – This is far too unnatural! We don't even dare to design a NPC that could do this sort of consistent damage output! This guy..." Fleeting Smile's face twitched a little as he realized the reality of the situation.

In Gu Fei's case, he was basically a person who already possessed a full set of skills with his kung fu. In all honesty, his kung fu was already considered to be similar to the skills found in-game. He had already started out with a fairly high skill proficiency rating, yet there was no telling what the limit to it was. To make matters worse, due to the design of the game, his skill would only become even more deadly as he leveled up and replaced his equipment for even more powerful ones.

At this rate, shouldn't we restrict him? This was the thought Fleeting Smile had when he ended his sneaky observation and made his way back to the city's safe zone and logged out. As for Gu Fei, he had only casually flicked his eyes toward Fleeting Smile's departing figure as he resumed his grinding.

Chapter 27 - A Misunderstanding Caused by a Burlap Sack

Ye Xiaowu did not idle around when he went offline; his mind was still mulling over the oddity that was Gu Fei. After pondering for a while, he sprang up in an instant, leaving his office and heading straight to the Game Administration Department of the company. The gaming company behind Parallel World was in fact a company that handled their own [R&D](#) and game administration. Ye Xiaowu was someone from the R&D Department, and the department which was in charge of the daily activities and maintenance of the game was actually the Game Administration Department.

In the Game Administration Department, there was a small group of people in charge of monitoring the various in-game data. Once an anomaly was detected, they would keep track of and analyze it further to check if the anomaly matched the settings of the in-game data. In short, it was a checkup to see if the players hacked the game.

There was an old saying that went: “While the priest climbs a foot, the devil climbs ten.” No matter how advanced the technology used, being hacked was almost inevitable, even for a game like Parallel World that had achieved the full-immersion technology. For online games, it was only natural to prioritize the elimination of hackers, as the benefits of having zero hackers outweighed the risks by far. Even though Parallel Word was implemented with cutting-edge technology, which was impossible to be cracked by the work of individuals or rogue hacker groups, the company did not dare to be sloppy in this particular aspect.

Some employees of the monitoring team were so shocked that they leaped from their seats when the office door was shoved open by Ye Xiaowu. It was not until they saw clearly who it was that

they breathed a sigh of relief, “Oh, it’s Chief Ye. Have you noticed yet another bug that needs fixing?”

As a core member of the R&D Department, Ye Xiaowu constantly pointed out the bugs for the game designs before going to the monitoring team to make adjustment for the in-game data. They often collaborated for work, and since it was usually Ye Xiaowu who noticed the bugs before the monitoring team could fix it, everyone on the team usually addressed him as Chief Ye.

“Gaming account’s name is ‘Thousand Miles Drunk.’ Do a checkup on the data of this account,” Ye Xiaowu said.

“That’s...” the members of the monitoring team looked one another in the eyes, before one of them blurted out, “That’s against the rules!”

Normally, anything that involved the in-game data for the game was out of bounds for someone from the R&D Department like Ye Xiaowu.

“There’s something fishy about this player,” Ye Xiaowu said.

All were alerted by what Ye Xiaowu just said, as this was exactly something that they were in charge of. They stopped their on-hand tasks immediately to direct every data monitoring system at Gu Fei, who was currently grinding inside the game. Someone could be heard mumbling, “Nothing unusual could be detected at all!”

To be frank, if someone like Ye Xiaowu had to remind them personally to check on a suspicious looking gaming account, it meant that the monitoring team had not been doing their job well. The entire team felt on edge right now.

Ye Xiaowu did not even care about how they felt. He fixed his gaze on the screen, as he wanted to confirm something with Gu Fei’s data. In the end, all the data monitoring systems had confirmed something for Ye Xiaowu; what he presumed before was right all along.

The rest of the employees had their eyes fixed on the screen as well. After staring at the screen for a while, they all looked at one another to confirm before breathing a sigh of relief. The result from the monitoring system was apparent: This account did not rely on any external applications.

However, Ye Xiaowu was still paying attention to the screen. Everyone followed along as they looked at one another once more. After observing for a while, everyone wore a surprised look.

“Just who is he?” one of them asked.

Ye Xiaowu remained silent. He had his reasons, of course. As stated by his boss before, all the employees were prohibited from playing the game directly. Even though his boss had turned a blind eye over this matter, he was still required to keep this a secret.

The employees took a closer look, and one of them muttered, “This person manages to deliver maximum damage output with every single attack... Is that really not a result of hacking?” Gu Fei’s remarkable performance had left these professional game employees skeptical of their judgment.

But after another round of checking with all the monitoring systems, the result was still the same: There was zero hacking involved.

“Goodness! Is he even human? Chief Ye, how did you find him?” one of them asked, astounded.

“I heard it from the others,” Ye Xiaowu spoke in an offhand manner before he changed the subject, “There’s nothing wrong with this account, right?”

“None at all!” everyone answered firmly.

“And the thing he’s doing is permitted, right?”

“Of course,” an employee smiled, “Maximum damage output can be delivered by the precision of attack and power. This is the concept which was designed by you and the rest of the R&D. You

must be pleased seeing that someone is actually capable of doing this.”

“Yes, very pleased,” Ye Xiaowu nodded.

“Conventionally speaking, this person is the top expert of control for Parallel World already,” one of them said.

Ye Xiaowu laughed and waved his hand, “Alright, there’s no issue now that we are sure that the account isn’t hacked. I am leaving; carry on everyone.”

On his way back to his office, Ye Xiaowu was still pondering on a question, “Thousand Miles Drunk, can he be considered as a game balance breaker?”

At this moment, the suspected game balance breaker Gu Fei was heartily practicing his kung fu in the map. All of a sudden, he received a message from Fireball, who was eagerly trying to invite Gu Fei for a drink.

Gu Fei considered Fireball to be the first person he befriended inside the game. Even if they did not grind together, they would still meet each other once in a while. Recently, he had not been keeping in touch with Fireball. Gu Fei packed his stuff instantly and embarked on the road back to the city.

The amount of weight Gu Fei could handle was actually very low. Unfortunately for him, he was very efficient during grinding, so there were heaps of items to loot every time he finished grinding. For this reason, he had to make a sack for himself to store all the miscellaneous loots. Unlike those items stored inside the pocket, Gu Fei could clearly feel the weights of these items when he carried them with his hands. At the same time, these items were not protected by the system.

As of right now, Gu Fei was actually walking with much difficulty as he carried the burlap sack with him. He got a boost of Strength from the emblem that he acquired today. That boost of Strength

meant he was able to grind at a faster rate and he managed to loot more items. Nothing really changed as his increase in Strength was evened out by the heavier loot that he had to carry.

As he passed by another map for grinding, his footsteps had gotten even heavier. He forced himself to walk two more steps before dropping the sack on the ground. He planned to rest for a few minutes as he leaned on a tree and gasped for air.

The players grinding in this map had noticed this weird occurrence. A few players' eyes were glowing as they saw this, and the next second they could be seen scrambling over to where Gu Fei was.

"Do you need help? Let me carry that for you!" Several people rushed to the front of Gu Fei, and were yelling the same thing at him as they tried to push one another aside.

"Oh, there's no need for that. I am actually—"

"Oh, you are too modest! Just let me help you!" one of the players barged onward without waiting for him to finish his sentence. He grabbed Gu Fei's sack and swung it across his shoulder. His eyes were already looking afar as he said, "Tell me! Where are you headed to?"

"Yunduan City," Gu Fei answered, "But I—"

"Let's go, then!" the person said nothing more, and just dashed forward ardently. The others players around them all revealed looks of jealousy and unwillingness at what had transpired.

"But I am not a NPC! I am a player, too!" Gu Fei said after a while. However, the person, who was already way ahead, failed to hear what he just said. As for those who were still surrounding Gu Fei, they had certainly heard him loud and clear. After being dumbstruck for a moment, they proceeded to sneer at the person who had stormed ahead. All of them stifled their laughs so as to not alert that person. They all gave Gu Fei a big thumbs-up, "Dude,

you did that on purpose, right? Solid move man; top notch!”

Due to the influence of trashy webnovels, many players were itching to find hidden quests that could be set into motion by all kinds of mysterious events. All were looking forward to a day when they could have their own amazing encounter. Gu Fei’s weird attire and the fact a burlap sack item was not available at the moment made people doubt he was a fellow player.

Misunderstandings were inevitable these days whenever Gu Fei dragged along his huge sack back to the city and passed by the grinding players in different maps. But every time that happened, Gu Fei would explain himself and the other players would leave dejectedly after using Appraisal on him. Unlike the others, this particular player he met today was exceptional. He craved a hidden quest so much that he did not even bother to listen to what Gu Fei had to say and just snatched the burlap sack away.

“Hey, you!” Gu Fei chased after him and yelled.

The other person simply waved gracefully and said, “Nothing is stopping me from helping you carry this back to your destination today!”

Gu Fei kept his mouth shut. Considering that person had made such a firm decision already, he might as well just let him do as he pleased. Gu Fei was never one to force others to do things his way. Carry it then if you are so eager to do it! Gu Fei was happy with his new-found easiness, and he walked leisurely behind the person. The person was equipped with heavy armor all over, and Gu Fei’s burlap sack which was rested on that person’s shoulder seemed very light by the way he was carrying it. It was obvious that his job class was a Warrior, the one with the most impressive physical abilities. But the person seemed to be very skinny judging from his stature.

Of course, a fat or skinny stature did not indicate how strong a player was in the game. A good example would be Gu Fei, who was

as frail as paper in the game even though he had been honing his body for more than twenty years.

From their current location, they still needed a few more minutes to reach Yunduan City. Gu Fei noticed that the player helping him with the sack was standing proud and tall along the way. And this had him in anguish again as he thought, A Warrior would have been a great choice as well if not a Fighter! The physique of a Mage is just too weak.

Finally, the two reached the city, and the person put down the burlap sack from his shoulder as he gazed warmly at Gu Fei's eyes.

"Thanks a lot!" Gu Fei patted the person's shoulder, lowered himself to lift the burlap sack up, and proceeded to stagger forward.

The other person was confused for a moment, but he snapped right back the next second and chased after Gu Fei as he said affectionately, "Where are you carrying all these to? I'll help you!"

"Oh, that won't be necessary. The warehouse is just in front of us, right?" Gu Fei said.

"Warehouse?" The person was stunned. The warehouse was truly a short distance away from them, but it was something that was reserved for players. The person sensed that something was not right, and said to Gu Fei, "Are you...."

"Hello, I am Thousand Miles Drunk," Gu Fei said.

"Are – Aren't you a NPC?" The other person had a dumbfounded expression.

With a deep sigh, Gu Fei said, "I am not."

R&D - stands for Research and Development.

Chapter 28 - Fireball joins a guild

“The heck! Who the hell are you?!” the person yelled while rushing at Gu Fei.

“I just told you, I’m Thousand Miles Drunk,” Gu Fei calmly replied, and then he realized something. The person’s shout just now sounded rather high pitched and the voice clearly contained a hint of sharpness. Gu Fei carefully examined the person’s face once more and was instantly taken aback, “You’re a woman?”

The person was wearing a full-body, heavy armor, but under the helmet was clearly a woman’s face. Her beauty was apparent, even though she was currently gnashing her teeth. The woman reached into her side pocket upon hearing his words. Gu Fei heard a whooshing sound and then a huge axe materialized in front of his very eyes. However, the truly terrifying fact was that she was holding it with only one hand, while her other hand was poised like a panther ready to strike. It was as if she could reach out and grab Gu Fei’s neck at any given time, hoisting him up and cleaving him into pieces with her weapon.

“Got a problem with that?” the lady produced a low growl. She had a versatile voice, allowing her to change pitch from high to low and vice versa.

“None at all!” Gu Fei blinked. It was undeniable that the woman looked powerful and intimidating.

“What do you mean, then?” The lady lifted the huge axe and hung it right above Gu Fei’s forehead.

“That I’m very thankful! Grateful that you helped carry my sack up to here. Honestly, carrying it takes a lot of effort for me,” Gu Fei said.

The woman showed some degree of shock at his statement.

“You know what? Take this as a gift! I don’t really need it

anyway,” Gu Fei tossed the burlap sack over by the lady’s feet.

“Who wants your stuff?” the woman asked sarcastically.

“I’ve got something on, so I’ll take my leave,” Gu Fei waved his hand and hurriedly walked away.

“Hey... You!” Gu Fei had long since disappeared from the corner of the street that they were in by the time she shouted these words. The speed that the level 30 Mage Gu Fei had after pumping all his stat points into Agility was nothing to scoff at.

The lady mulled something over for a bit before she lowered her head. Finally, she could no longer resist the temptation and picked up the sack.

Her curiosity got the better of her and she opened it. “I’m only taking a look. It’s not like I want any of his stuff,” the lady mumbled to herself. Her decision turned into firm resolve after seeing what was actually inside.

“What?!”

“What the?!”

“What are these things?!”

As the woman searched through the sack, she could not stop herself from muttering the same words. While Gu Fei’s sack contained many things, their value was actually very little. Gu Fei was not an idiot after all; the items with worth were already placed into his dimensional pocket.

The lady spent quite some time searching through the burlap sack, finding only countless useless loots, such as a pile of bricks, a bunch of rocks, a single glass ball, and a rotten wooden stick. The items that the players had deemed worthless could all be found inside Gu Fei’s burlap sack.

In the end, the lady came to the conclusion that she had been trolled. Perhaps someone had recorded the humorous manner in

which she stuck her head into the sack and searched through the items. She might find herself as the butt of everyone's jokes in a few days once the video got uploaded on to the forums. Thinking of that possibility, she heavily slammed her huge axe onto the ground, causing pieces of concrete to fly all over. A brutal Warrior paired with an equally savage weapon. That strike just now was carried out with extreme graveness.

Thousand Miles Drunk is it? You better not let me see you again, the lady thought with fury.

“What a real pity about my sack! Achooo!” Gu Fei suddenly sneezed as he was thinking of how much he missed having his self-made burlap sack. At the same moment, he arrived outside the tavern. He quickly rubbed his nose and pushed open the wooden door.

There were numerous system-operated taverns in Yunduan City except for Ray's Bar. Since it was a sprawling city, many bars were spread all over it to accommodate all the players, as well as to better earn their money.

The tavern Gu Fei had just entered was one of the most popular establishments in the area. Since it was the closest to the city gate most players were grinding, it was naturally everyone's first choice to rest at. The tavern was open from day to night, so the sounds of players' conversations filled the entire establishment twenty-four seven.

Fireball, who had already grabbed a good seat, stood up once he saw Gu Fei enter the tavern, “Drunk bro, over here!”

“Yo, What's-His-Name!” Gu Fei cheerfully greeted back.

Fireball felt dejected. He had even taken the effort to address Gu Fei properly, yet here he was calling him What's-His-Name. It was no wonder the players around them threw him a disdainful look, thinking that he was the sort of person who stuck around the pros to leech off them.

However, he could do nothing about this as it was all due to his gaming account name. He would still be a laughingstock had Gu Fei called him Fireball. Every time such a conundrum would pop up, the thought of dying would fill his heart.

“Sit! What’re you standing there for?” Gu Fei had already taken a seat and was patting the table to catch the attention of the momentarily frozen Fireball.

“How’s life? Found a guild yet?” Gu Fei understood what he was feeling right now, so he tried providing a new topic to snap him out of his depressing thoughts.

Fireball indeed sat down once he heard the question and replied, “Nope! Although I did see one I’m interested in, so I’m trying to find a way to get in.”

“Is that so?” Gu Fei lifted the glass off the table. The glass was filled with red wine that was sold for 50 copper coins and was largely considered as the cheapest in-game liquor available; the said wine made the most sales as well. Many players were obliged to order something since they were in a tavern, but almost no one was willing to purchase a drink except for the cheapest one. This was because many of them thought that their hard-earned coins should be spent on more important things. “What guild caught your eye?” Gu Fei asked as he took a big gulp of the drink as if it was nothing more than water.

“Amethyst Rebirth,” Fireball said.

Pfftttt! Gu Fei spat out half of the wine he originally had in his mouth. It was a blessing that he was a full Agility-based Mage, as he somehow managed to turn his neck and avoid spitting his drink all over Fireball at the last minute.

“What?” Fireball was surprised at Gu Fei’s strong reaction.

“Nothing. I choked,” Gu Fei coughed loudly as he asked, “What’s so special about this guild?”

“Drunk bro, have you not seen the forums?” Fireball replied with a question.

“Not recently, no,” Gu Fei answered.

“On the players’ interactive board, there’re various threads for each major city in-game. Right now, many guilds are busily recruiting players on these threads. That’s where I found this guild in our city’s thread,” Fireball spoke as his eyes glinted.

“Oh...” Gu Fei sounded, letting Fireball continue his narration.

Fireball shadily glanced around them before he moved his seat closer to the table as he whispered, “Drunk bro, you better not tell others what I’m about to tell you.”

“It’s already on the forums; why are you afraid others would find out?” Gu Fei asked.

“No no no!” Fireball anxiously responded, “That thread has long been buried. It took me quite a while to dig for it. It’s a post made not long after the game started. Guess what sort of guild it is?”

“What?” Gu Fei had pulled out the guild tab of Amethyst Rebirth and swept it a few times while he asked Fireball.

“It’s a guild of babes!” Fireball’s voice rose an octave in excitement, and his sentence ended up missing a key word.

Gu Fei did not give this much thought. He had already met a few ladies from Amethyst Rebirth. As for them being babes, it depended entirely on what a person considered as a 'babe'. Using Xi Xiaotian as the standard, then none of them would make the cut. If someone was to be more specific in defining the term, then July, Lie Lie, and another whose name he could not recall could be considered as beauties.

Given how Parallel World projected the actual person’s figure and features, some of those ladies would be considered as dishonest, immodest, or even excessively narcissistic if they believed themselves to be 'babes'.

“So Drunk bro, you interested?” Fireball asked.

Gu Fei smiled forcefully. Just how was he going to tell Fireball?

“Let me read you their requirements!” Fireball said as he took out a booklet from his pocket. He cleared his throat and began, “Number one: able to stand on their own and not be too dependent on others. How is it? I fit the criteria, yeah?” Fireball’s voice cracked in his excitement.

Gu Fei nodded. It was true that Fireball had not followed him and leeches off experience despite Gu Fei being such an efficient monster slayer. This showed clearly that he was capable of standing on his own and not depending on others.

Gu Fei’s nod stirred Fireball’s heart and he could not wait to continue listing the requirements. However, Gu Fei extended his hand and stopped him, “Although I think you probably fit the basic requirements listed, there’s one thing you don’t fit.”

“What?”

“Didn’t they mention they only recruit female players?” Gu Fei stated.

“Drunk bro, how did you know?” Fireball was stunned.

“Since you said it’s a guild full of babes, it’s obvious they only recruit female players,” Gu Fei said.

“I don’t think so,” Fireball scratched his head as he shared his opinion, “I think the requirements are just a pretense. The guild officials are attracting all the babes first. Then, they will use this bevy of babes to lure men in to create a first-rate guild. Once the leaders have recruited enough female players, they will definitely start accepting male players since they need people like me to be their knight in shining armor.”

Gu Fei sighed. He would have seen the merit of Fireball’s reasoning as well had he not interacted personally with the members of Amethyst Rebirth. Those people actually saw him like

the plague. It was barely a day since he had joined in and they already wanted him to quit the guild of his accord. Was that the action of a guild that wanted a male player to join in?

Just as he was thinking of ways to explain things clearly to Fireball, Gu Fei suddenly heard someone nearby call him, “You’re here too, Thousand Miles Drunk.”

Gu Fei turned and saw a fellow member from Amethyst Rebirth. She was the one July referred to as Luo Luo and someone whom Gu Fei might consider as one of the three beauties, provided that the standard was lowered.

“Oh, hello,” Gu Fei got up and greeted her.

Fireball’s eyes were filled with admiration when he looked at Gu Fei. Would learning kung fu cause one to be gifted in such areas? Fireball started to ponder if perhaps he should take Gu Fei as his teacher.

Chapter 29 - Repeating Fireball

Luo Luo held on to her own glass and walked toward Gu Fei and Fireball's table.

"Is it alright if I join you?" Luo Luo said as she indicated the empty seat next to their table.

Fireball was very excited. Every time he sat with Gu Fei, they would take up two seats out of the possible three or four, leaving one or two seats empty to create such an opportunity.

Gu Fei felt rather surprised by her question. He had initially thought that the lady only greeted them out of courtesy, yet she unexpectedly asked to sit with them. Gu Fei naturally was not an inhospitable person so he nodded, "Go ahead!"

"My name's [Ruthless Falling Flowers](#)," Luo Luo introduced herself as she sat down.

"That's a nice name," Gu Fei complimented.

"Is that the only way you know how to praise others?" Luo Luo snickered at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei felt embarrassed once he recalled how his flippant use of the sentence back then had caused that hot-tempered lady Lie Lie to send a fist his way.

"What's your name?" Luo Luo asked Fireball gracefully.

Fireball stared at her for quite a while before he covered his face and wept.

"What's up with him?" Luo Luo was perplexed.

Gu Fei tried his best to hold back his laughter, "He's called..." He didn't finish his sentence, but rather dipped his finger into his wine and wrote the name on the table.

"Oh, Fireball" Luo Luo laughed as well.

Fireball reflexively tensed up, yet Luo Luo simply laughed and said, “Don’t worry, I’m not a Mage.”

Fireball heaved a sigh of relief. He immediately livened up and began unloading his misery to Luo Luo, telling her all the troubles the name had brought him. The way he said it seemed as if the burden of his name was so severe that it had formed a shadow in his heart, and that only a truly powerful surge of emotions, such as getting to know a lady like herself, could remove this shade.

Seeing that Fireball no longer cared to discuss with him regarding guild matters, Gu Fei simply chuckled as he stood up and said, “Keep chatting you two. I’m taking my leave first.”

“Go ahead! Bye!” Fireball thanked Gu Fei’s perceptiveness.

“Wait!” Luo Luo stood up, causing Fireball to feel as if he had fallen into a frozen cellar.

Gu Fei turned back to look at her.

“I’ve got something for you,” Luo Luo said.

“What is it?”

Luo Luo took out a small emblem from her pocket. It had a circular shape and a white background. The drawing was similar to the signage exuding a faint purple glow that could be seen hanging outside B17 on Charlotte Street.

“What’s this?”

“Guild emblem. Everyone in the guild has one,” Luo Luo explained.

“Ah? Drunk bro, you joined a guild? What guild is it? Why didn’t you mention it before?” Fireball already fired off all these questions with great intensity before Gu Fei could even speak a word.

“Ah! This... Actually, it’s a mistake. I’ll only stay in this guild for no more than a few days,” Gu Fei said.

“That’s not true,” Luo Luo laughed, “Xiaoqi doesn’t exactly dislike you. She might convince the rest of the ladies to accept having a male player in the guild.”

“Ladies? Male player?” Fireball muttered before suddenly asking, “What’s your guild name?”

“It’s the guild you were telling me about: Amethyst Rebirth,” Gu Fei said apologetically. Pain filled his heart as he sought for Fireball’s forgiveness.

Fireball suddenly sprung up and earnestly looked at Luo Luo and Gu Fei, loudly saying, “Sister Luo, since you don’t mind one, surely you wouldn’t mind two. I am Drunk bro’s junior; I’m like his shadow, so wherever he goes, I go as well. No one could separate us two brothers.”

Gu Fei felt embarrassed. He really wanted to declare to everyone that he did not know this man.

Luo Luo giggled impassively, “One more only makes two, so I don’t really mind.”

Fireball was elated.

“It’s a pity that I have no say in this,” Luo Luo added.

Fireball was on the verge of tears.

Gu Fei, on the other hand, gazed at the emblem that Luo Luo had placed on the table and said after a pause, “There’s no need to complicate things. I’ll just leave once you girls find a suitable person.”

“If that’s the case, so be it.” Luo Luo retrieved the emblem from the table.

Fireball was very bewildered as he stared at Gu Fei. He emotionally said, “Drunk bro, don’t do that. Since you’ve been given the chance, you shouldn’t just give up! You don’t have to care about my feelings.”

“You two can keep chatting, I’m leaving first,” Gu Fei didn’t even look at him as he turned around to leave.

Fireball carried on shouting, “Drunk bro, I understand your feelings. From here on, I’ve already decided! You’ll be my brother FOREVER!”

Gu Fei could no longer bear the crowd’s look of amusement as if they were watching a comedy duo’s live performance. He abruptly spun, raised his right hand, and hollered, “SHUT UP! Repeating Fireball! Fire!”

“Ah!” all the bar customers called out in shock.

Repeating Fireball was a level 30 Mage spell after all.

Despite Parallel World’s setting adjustment and the lowering of the experience points needed to ascend to level 30, some of the players did not reach that level yet. This was especially the case for Mages who were known for having a more difficult time gaining levels in the game’s early stages.

None of the players in the tavern had seen a level 30 Mage before, not to mention the level 30 spell. Hence, everyone was staring at the scene unblinkingly. In this virtual reality game, high attack, speed, or defense could not be compared to the coolness of a Mage chanting and releasing a spell. Many players only realized this after personally experiencing the game. Thus, for countless nights, many players cried into their pillows, “How wonderful would it have been if I had chosen a Mage job class back then....”

Gu Fei was probably the only person who regretted being a Mage in Parallel World.

The annoyed Mage aimed at Fireball and released the spell for the first time. Gu Fei might be the only Mage as well that got to level 30 without using spells all the time.

The crowd became filled with anticipation except for Fireball who was flustered and absolutely clueless. However, Repeating

Fireball had yet to appear.

“What’s going on?” Gu Fei shook his finger with doubt. Magic could clearly be released with just bare hands; a magic staff only increased the damage of a spell, and incantations were not needed to be said either!

The players, originally preparing for a breathtaking performance, all jeered. They thought that the person must have not reached level 30 yet and was simply shouting out the spell to scare others.

Just when people lowered their guard, a flaming dragon left Gu Fei’s fingertip and explosively shot out in a stream, causing even him to feel frightened.

“F*ck, that’s a really long casting time!” Some rather quick-witted players already figured out what had happened.

The flaming dragon quickly circled and formed into a string of fireballs as it flew toward Fireball and bombarded him.

“Ahhh!” Fireball was enveloped in flames under the shocked gasp of the crowd.

The tavern became still and quiet. In half a beat, a series of wracking coughs broke the silence.

“That hurts like hell!” Fireball yelled as he wiped his face with his hands, which was now streaked with black soot.

“Eh?” everyone was astonished, “What trash damage! This guy’s nothing after all.” Although Mages were known for having the weakest physique in-game, the damage they could deal was staggering. Everyone knew that the level 30 spell could normally instantly destroy any opponent, unless the opponent had plenty of health or had equipment with high magic resistance.

Unlike Gu Fei who wore mismatched outfit, the others could easily identify that Fireball was a Mage from his attire. A Mage did not possess high HP in Parallel World.

“Does that person have high magic resistance gear?” someone asked doubtfully.

An expert with Appraisal quickly said, “Nope. He’s wearing common-grade equipment.”

Everyone’s attention therefore shifted toward Gu Fei.

Based on the current analysis, Mages would focus their stat points on to Intelligence and Spirit. These two attributes affected a Mage’s magic damage, casting time, and magic proficiency. Intelligence especially influenced damage and proficiency, whereas Spirit mainly influenced the casting time. A recent rumor even claimed that once Spirit reached a certain threshold, the cool-down time of the skill would be reduced.

In this case, Gu Fei displayed a long-casting time as well as a low magic damage.

Everyone could only feel their suspicions accumulate. How could such a Mage manage to survive and get to level 30?

“It must be because they’re friends, so the other one held back,” some player quietly analyzed.

“You’re right. Look, he’s not even carrying a magic staff.”

“But how did he have such a long-casting time?”

“Hey. Didn’t he add a few words before he casted the spell?”

“Uh-huh, it went like ‘Shut up!’”

“Could it be a hidden incantation that extends a spell’s casting time?” someone excitedly asked.

“Let’s go and try it out.” Many Mages got up and hurriedly left the tavern. After a bit, various shouts of “Shut up! XXX spell!” traveled back to the tavern from outside that gradually went away.

Gu Fei had also recovered at this moment. He felt that he was rather rash a while ago.

“You, alright? Fire... What’s-His-Name?” Gu Fei asked.

“I’m fine!” Fireball declared loudly, “Drunk bro, don’t mind it. We’re brothers after all! I won’t get angry no matter what you do.”

“Alright. I’ll take my leave, then!” Gu Fei could not stand Fireball’s antics anymore.

“Can you still leave?” a voice came from behind Gu Fei.

Gu Fei turned and saw a heavily armored Warrior; a sense of foreboding instantaneously filled him.

“It’s you!” Gu Fei laughed, recognizing the Warrior that had helped him with his burlap sack.

The female Warrior’s eyes were icy cold. Her right hand suddenly moved. Gu Fei had long expected the attack and he swiftly escaped outside while dodging it.

“Don’t you dare run!” The female Warrior brandished her huge axe and chased after him. Everyone from the tavern quickly followed the two.

Gu Fei did not run off very far and was actually standing just outside the tavern. His hand now held a weapon like his opponent. The crowd was shocked at the sight of the sword in his hand as they knew very well that he was a level 30 Mage.

“Lady, what happened? Let’s slowly talk this over,” Gu Fei earnestly said, albeit he did not let his guard down. Just from their exchange from back before, it was easy to see that this woman had a very careless yet stubborn personality.

Once she decided on something, she would go ahead and do it, just like when she decided to help him carry the burlap sack.

At the moment, she wanted to use that axe to cleave him in two. Since that was her intention, she would naturally act upon it. Why would she speak to him any further? For her to speak once more, Gu Fei would have to wait for her to relieve her anger by hacking

him.

The woman truly did not listen to Gu Fei's words and just swung her axe as she closed in on him.

Gu Fei dodged the blow and reciprocated by cutting toward her arm with a reverse swing.

Clang! Gu Fei's heart froze for half a beat when he heard that sound.

The way the strike vibrated through his arm told him without a doubt that his sword did not even scratch the woman's armor.

Gu Fei's Mage body had no Attack Power to begin with; the damage he could deal came purely from the weapon he held. Now that he had Eddie's Emblem, his Strength helped add a few more points to his Attack Power. Nonetheless, the fact that he was a physically weak Mage did not change. The extra 6 stat points to Strength that his Mage body had acquired was still not a match for a Strength-based Warrior.

Hence, penetrating the Warrior's strong defense was not doable even with the combination of his 6 stat points of Strength and the common-grade weapon's damage.

Gu Fei truly had no way of causing any amount of damage to this heavily armored Warrior.

Ruthless Falling Flowers - has first appeared in Chapter 25, in which she's called 'Xiaoluo'. Her full in-game name is 落花无情 (Ruthless Falling Flowers), but the others usually call her 落落 (Luo Luo) or 小落(Xiaoluo).

Chapter 30 - Cyclone

Gu Fei finally encountered his first obstacle after having it easy playing the game so far.

Using kung fu to defeat the female Warrior opposite him right now might be easier said than done. The female Warrior's defense was akin to that lower-half armor worn by Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto back then. She did not even budge as Gu Fei struck her with his sword.

The lady's entire body was being concealed by her armor and helmet, and only her face was visible. Gu Fei felt that striking her face might be overdoing it, seeing as they just had a little misunderstanding. It was not as if a deep grudge existed between them. It was just a little misunderstanding caused by a burlap sack.

In reality, no matter how well-made a suit of armor, it could not safeguard a person's entire body as there would always be opening near the joints. Those areas of the armor were deliberately given less reinforcement to provide a person a full range of motion or the ability to move freely. Unfortunately for Gu Fei, as realistic as the game's simulation was, it was still not possible for it to be realistic in every aspect. The person inside the armor was unusually agile, and Gu Fei's sword forcefully bounced back even when he slashed it at the joints of the body armor.

Gu Fei and the lady traded blows for a few more rounds. He came to the same conclusion after he tried attacking her right wrist, left knee, and left shoulder: The armor was impenetrable.

The harmless attacks had in fact reassured the lady. She was freed from all her worries now that she saw all the attacks, which Gu Fei inflicted on her, were ineffective. She swung her huge axe wildly, as she charged toward Gu Fei as if she was a huge windmill.

Gu Fei was left with no choice but to dodge the barrage of attacks as he tried to come up with ways to counterattack.

The curious spectators coming out from the tavern were so astonished that their jaws fell to the ground.

All formed the same opinion about Gu Fei in their minds: manly.

If a Mage that dared to clash directly against a Warrior with a sword was not considered manly, then no one else would be.

This manly Mage was a little foolish, however! Confronting the enemy's strong point with his own weak point, how was that not foolish?

Everyone could see where this was going; Gu Fei could not harm the opponent with his common-grade sword and only managed to drag the fight with his agile movements. He continued to dodge every strike with little trouble, yet the Warrior remained patient while dishing out her attacks. She was not the least bit perturbed by continuously missing her target with her swings.

Gu Fei did not give up either. He focused on attacking the armor's joints while he kept dodging. But it was still futile even after attacking five or six different joints on the armor.

Looks like this will be a battle of patience, Gu Fei analyzed. He was curious which one of them would be the first to become fed up with this battle since they could not harm each other.

The answer was revealed soon enough: It was the spectators!

Seeing Gu Fei had no chance of physically slaying his opponent, everyone began to wonder why he did not use spells during the fight.

"Spells! Spells!" everyone began to chant along after one of them started it.

It was a must have during a PvP for a Mage, yet Gu Fei needed to be reminded by others to use his spells. This led to a change of heart in him, Nothing wrong with trying spells now that my kung fu is not working. Gu Fei was not a stubborn and inflexible person after all.

He moved to a side to evade the incoming swing, and raised his sword and yelled at the top of his lungs, “Fireball!”

“Here I am!” somebody nearby replied to him.

“F*ck off!” Gu Fei roared at Fireball’s direction, before turning back and issuing a command to the ball of fire he summoned, “Fire!”

The fireball flew straight toward the female Warrior.

She seemed to be a little stumped at first, but she swung her huge axe the next instant to tear apart the little fireball that was unleashed by Gu Fei.

The fireball exploded near the edge of the axe. Did it cause any damage? Gu Fei was not sure as he could not feel the sensation in his hand like physical combat.

“You are actually a Mage?” The female Warrior did not actually continue to swing her huge axe at Gu Fei like how he had anticipated. The lady rested her huge axe near her foot and sized Gu Fei up.

What an obtuse lady! It took her this long to realize I am actually a Mage, Gu Fei thought to himself.

To be frank, unless they knew about Gu Fei’s identity beforehand, nobody would actually think he was a Mage judging from the way he fought just now.

The female Warrior was a little alarmed at the moment. The person in front of her was not slow in terms of speed, and he could actually dodge all her attacks with ease. If he had maintained a distance between them and attacked with spells a while ago, she would have been dead by now.

“I don’t need you to go easy on me!” the lady blurted out what was on her mind.

“Go easy on you?” Gu Fei did not really understand this.

Am I being tricked by him again? The lady's anger, which had been reduced by half through the battle, was immediately replenished as soon as she thought of that.

With her right hand, she lifted the huge axe that rested on her leg. She raised her left hand as well and held on to the axe's handle.

It was a battle stance that the lady had not displayed previously! Until now, she had been wielding her axe with just an arm. Gu Fei, who possessed considerable real combat experiences, could tell that something was about to happen. A powerful skill is coming right up.

Sure enough, a whirlwind emerged from the ground and wrapped around the lady as she stepped forward with her right leg and turned her body.

"Ah! Cyclone!" someone among the spectators yelled.

The skill Warriors could learn once they reached level 30: Cyclone.

The rotation carried the weapon along to execute a 360-degree attack from every direction. While the skill's damage output was dependent on the user's proficiency, the skill's duration was decided by a Warrior's Rage points. Theoretically speaking, if a Warrior had unlimited Rage points, then this particular skill could be carried on for an infinite amount of time.

As for the Rage points, they increased the most when a Warrior was being attacked. They would slowly accumulate as well when a Warrior hit an enemy or slay an enemy. It was an aspect unique to the Warrior job class.

Gu Fei had been slashing away at the female Warrior for god knew how many times already. The increase in Rage points caused by a single attack from Gu Fei was not that much since his slashes were basically harmless to her. However, the Rage points had been

slowly accumulating. Right now, the lady's Rage points bar was close to being full.

As she unleashed her skill, the spectators were forced to take a few steps back from the impact. It was as if the lady had spun herself into a vortex as a huge cyclone formed in the middle of the venue. Her huge axe could be seen turning into a black ray and mixing itself into the cyclone. The cyclone then flew toward Gu Fei's direction.

It's too fast!

Nobody would have expected that the clunky Warrior could perform such a high-speed spinning like this when she executed the skill.

Close-combat job classes are really the best after all! Gu Fei was still in the mood to express such a thought even when everyone was squealing loudly at his impending doom.

The Warrior's Cyclone moved faster than Gu Fei as she spun like a whirlwind. It was impossible to avoid the attack.

Gu Fei could only raise his sword in an attempt to block the attack. Yet, pinpointing the axe's trajectory inside the whirlwind was not a simple matter, and blocking it when it was spinning this fast was even more so.

Even though Gu Fei was confronting the skill with all his might, he knew that it would be impossible to stop the attack, seeing how her Cyclone was rolling with such force. However, giving up before the very end was not Gu Fei's style.

A loud sound of breaking could be heard as Gu Fei's common-grade sword split into halves. He lost his balance as the gusty wind blew over his body, and then he was swept upward and thrown into the air by it.

It was obvious just how much defense Gu Fei possessed with his beginner mage robe. He would have already faded away as a white

light if he had not somewhat blocked that devastating blow just now. Still, death was inevitable for him, seeing how his body was bleeding all over and how his HP was diminishing at a visible rate.

“I failed to dodge it!” Gu Fei felt frustrated. He made a last ditch effort at the very end. Initially, he had planned to borrow the rotation force of the Cyclone to send himself outward in order to evade the attack. Yet, who would have thought that his sword would break apart at that decisive moment? Instead of dodging the attack by borrowing the momentum of the Cyclone, Gu Fei’s sword shattered and the axe hit him multiple times before he was flung outward. He barely managed to avoid a death sentence and succeeded in postponing it... for a mere two seconds.

“I would actually need a miracle to stay alive,” Gu Fei smiled bitterly. And yet, there was indeed a miracle!

A ray of white light suddenly appeared and shrouded Gu Fei. He thought it was a summon to the death, but his HP that was close to running out actually stopped depleting further and could be seen replenishing faintly.

Gu Fei who had never experienced it before was not aware that this was the most basic skill of a Priest: Heal.

As Gu Fei fell down from the attack, he looked around and managed to grasp the entire picture. He saw the lady called Luo Luo continuously bestowing Heal on him. However, Gu Fei was not safe just yet. His HP was still depleting, and an advanced Priest skill called Cure was needed before he could fully recover from his wounds. Unfortunately, there was nobody around with that skill at the moment. All Luo Luo could do was bestow Heal on Gu Fei repeatedly to maintain his health. It was a tug of war between a healing skill and the depleting HP.

Of course, the female Warrior was not happy seeing somebody interrupt the PvP between her and Gu Fei. But when she turned around and saw the one performing Heal, she was stunned, “Sis

Luo Luo.”

Luo Luo nodded in acknowledgement as she slid her hand into her pocket and pulled out a few bottles of medication and a roll of bandage. She handed the items to the dumbfounded Fireball and said, “Go and get his condition stabilized.”

Fireball snapped himself back and rushed to Gu Fei’s side after receiving the items. He lowered his body down toward Gu Fei.

I’m saved! Gu Gei thought to himself, as he saw the items on Fireball’s hands, and how the female Warrior and Luo Luo actually knew each other.

However, Fireball just held on to the items without using them. Gu Fei stared at him with a puzzled expression.

“Hurry! Why are you spacing out like that?” Luo Luo was panicking at the other side. She was using Heal like crazy to restore Gu Fei’s HP which just kept on dropping. It seemed like Gu Fei’s injury was pretty serious. If this continued, her own MP would be depleted as well. By then, it would be too late to heal Gu Fei even if they used the medicine.

Fireball whispered covertly to Gu Fei, “Drunk bro, do you want to stop the bleeding with your acupuncture strikes first?”

Gu Fei was already about to curse at him, but he managed to endure the urge to actually do it. I am a teacher! Gu Fei calmed himself down, and said coldly to Fireball, “You read too many wuxia novels.”

“Oh? You don’t actually know how to do acupuncture strikes?” Fireball seemed to be in quite a shock.

“The medicine!” Gu Fei could not stand it anymore and he yelled at Fireball. His HP had dropped significantly when he got agitated and Luo Luo became frantic as a result.

“I’ll do it!” The lady who had wounded Gu Fei approached them.

“What are you up to?” Fireball said this righteously as he blocked her from getting close to Gu Fei.

“Oh, f*ck you! Just heal me already,” Gu Fei’s voice got weaker by the second.

Chapter 31 - June's Rain

“Get out of the way!” The axe-wielding Warrior in heavy armor was also anxious as she gave Fireball a kick.

Having fought with Gu Fei for quite some time before all this, the Warrior did not hold back with her kick. Since Fireball was not an expert like Gu Fei, he was knocked away easily and flew for about five meters, even managing to somersault twice.

As he lay prone on the ground, Fireball opened his eyes and exclaimed something very disgraceful in the end, “F*ck, what a babe!”

The armor clanked loudly as the lady knelt on the ground. She picked up the bandage roll that Fireball had dropped and began to deftly patch up Gu Fei without muttering a word.

“Hey,” Gu Fei softly called.

“What?” the lady asked.

“Can you apply the medication before bandaging me? What do you think?” Gu Fei asked.

“Crap!” she quickly shouted. The lady unwound the bandage strip, picked up a bottle of medication, and directly poured it over his wounds.

Gu Fei felt worn out. He tried to remind himself that this was just a game, so the issue of hygiene should not cause a serious problem like wound infection. He did not mention any of this out loud though and just quietly subjected himself to the lady's ministrations.

His HP stopped dropping once the bleeding abated with the help of the medication and bandage. Gu Fei got back up to his feet after Luo Luo bestowed Heal on him a few more times. Neither his back nor his waist was in pain anymore. Fireball, who still lay prone on the ground about five meters away, could not say the same,

however. He lifted his neck as he called out, “Save me....”

Gu Fei irately made his way over, and went about helping him up. Once Gu Fei squatted down next to his body, Fireball whispered to him, “Drunk bro, don’t bother with me. I’m waiting for the babe to come over and help me get up!”

Gu Fei felt angry! Having already lifted him up halfway, he immediately threw him back on the ground once more and walked away.

The two ladies felt it was weird so they looked at Fireball as they asked Gu Fei, “What’s wrong?”

“He’s already dead,” Gu Fei declared.

Both swept their eyes over Fireball and did not say another word. Seeing that the fight was already over and that it was resolving toward a happy ending, the crowd simply lost interest and noisily dispersed.

“Let’s go in!” Luo Luo invited Gu Fei and the Warrior back to the tavern.

Gu Fei indicated the two ladies to enter before him; he expressionlessly stared at Fireball for a bit before going in as well.

Fireball felt snubbed as he crawled back up to his feet still dusty from the fight, and quickly followed the others inside.

Everyone in the tavern was seated once more. Luo Luo and the Warrior sat beside each other on one side of the circular table. Gu Fei waited for Fireball to catch up before they joined and sat across the ladies.

The Warrior had taken off her equipment – helmet, axe, and suit of armor – one by one and stuffed them into her dimensional pocket before she sat down. It was quite an unbelievable sight. But since everyone was already familiar with how the game inventory system worked, no one felt surprised.

The lady's commoner clothes, probably sold at a thrift in-game shop, became visible once she had taken off her heavy armor. Her long hair was in a mess after being confined in the armor for so long. Her sweaty appearance due to the huge fight a while ago made her seem like someone who belonged to the Beggar Sect in a wuxia novel.

She tidied herself up and lifted her head to stare at Gu Fei and Fireball as they sat down. "Eh, weren't you dead?" the lady inquisitively looked at Fireball.

Oh, man! This woman is far too silly! The corners of Gu Fei's mouth twitched as he casually said, "This tavern is really close to a spawn point."

"There's a spawn point nearby?" the woman wondered aloud.

No one bothered to explain the situation to her. Luo Luo gazed at her and Gu Fei for a bit before asking, "What's up with you two?"

Gu Fei had on a forced smile as he proceeded to tell her of the misunderstanding between him and the female Warrior that had occurred not long ago. Fireball uproariously laughed out loud on the spot.

Luo Luo, being a model of beauty and grace, tried her very best not to laugh. However, she gave up halfway through the story; she held her hand against her mouth, turned her cheek to the side, and giggled uncontrollably.

"Oi! It's not funny at all!" the Warrior woman indignantly said as she slapped the table.

"Agree," Gu Fei said seriously, "I've walked past there many times. The misunderstanding has already happened quite a few times!"

"Yes! I wasn't the only one who ran up to him! What are you all laughing for?!" the lady muttered angrily.

"I'll stop, I'll stop," Luo Luo removed her hand from her mouth

and maintained a slight smile as she sat there. Fireball forced himself to stop laughing as well, even as he shook visibly from the effort, nearly flipping the table from his lack of propriety.

Seeing that Gu Fei was not mocking her, the Warrior decided to bury the hatchet between them and addressed him, “My name’s June’s Rain. You?”

“Thousand Miles Drunk,” Gu Fei said.

“And you?” June’s Rain stared at Fireball. She figured that since he was seated at the same table as them, she should at least ask for his name as well.

Fireball’s smiling face transformed into a crying face when she asked.

Luo Luo smiled, “His name’s Fireball.”

“If you’re called Fireball, just say Fireball! What are you crying for?” June’s Rain was surprised.

“I’m a Mage,” Fireball’s tears rolled down his face.

“So what?” June’s Rain asked.

Gu Fei shook his head by the side. Something must be wrong within the heads of these two. June’s Rain failed to grasp the joke behind Fireball’s name, and remained clueless even after Fireball mentioned that he was a Mage. She was so ditzy that it hurt. Fireball was no better either. Replying “So what if you’re called Fireball” with “I’m a Mage” was not the least bit connected! Fireball’s name only inconvenienced the Mages, such as Gu Fei, around him when they had to say his name during conversations. It had nothing to do with what his job class was. It was not as if he would call out his own name outside of battle often.

June’s Rain did not understand the meaning behind Fireball’s name but decided to let it go. Instead, she focused her attention back to Gu Fei, “Your name seems familiar!”

“Is that so?” Gu Fei smiled as he thought of how he had the title of being the second most efficient player in leveling up.

“Oh, yeah!” June’s Rain suddenly slapped the table and stood up, “You’re the guy who got into our guild.”

Gu Fei instinctively pulled out the guild tab and took a look. He indeed found her name on the list at level 30, albeit she was one position lower than him. When he looked at the guild tab for the first time that day, he was so startled by how all the guild members were listed as ‘female’ that he did not focus on their names. Afterward, he never bothered to look through the name list again since he did not care who they were.

“[Xiaoyu](#), don’t say that. It’s all a misunderstanding,” Luo Luo attempted to help Gu Fei explain the situation.

“Is that so?” June’s Rain looked at Gu Fei, “Really? Even if it’s just a misunderstanding to begin with, what if he starts having certain ideas?” June’s Rain had abundant experience with online games. One could tell this just from her obsession with hidden quests.

Because a majority of players in online games were males, they tended to flock toward the female players. If not for the fact that online games had many [G.I.R.L](#) players, the men would have continued to bother every female character they encountered. However, males could no longer masquerade as females in Parallel World, seeing as all retained their real appearance. Furthermore, a few sensitive issues emerged that did not need to be mentioned given how realistic the game’s immersion system was. This was why many male players could be seen hitting on female players all the time in Yunduan City.

An all-female guild like Amethyst Rebirth would naturally attract these lecherous male players’ attention. Although June’s Rain was not that bright when it came to most matters, she was exceptionally attuned with matters pertaining to the game.

Gu Fei could only smile with regard to her suspicion, not saying another word.

“I don’t care what you do with the others. Just don’t dare to hit on me! Truth be told, I’m a lesbian. So I’m not interested in men,” June’s Rain stated.

“Really?” Gu Fei could not help but laugh. She was so bad at lying. It was a wonder how she came up with it. “Since that’s the case, you can just treat me like your brother!” Gu Fei said.

“That’s right!” the lady nodded her head seriously. She then extended her hand to Gu Fei, “Shake.”

Gu Fei extended his hand as well without another thought.

F*ck! Gu Fei screamed internally as they shook hands, What a m*therf*cking violent Warrior! He inexplicably felt depressed as he swore inside him. June’s Rain did not hold back with her grip’s strength at all, and Gu Fei could not resist given his weak physique.

Pain was one thing, but tolerance was another. Gu Fei’s hand hurt as he angrily cursed in his heart, yet his face showed no change in expression whatsoever.

“Eh? Aren’t you in pain?” June’s Rain actually asked him this.

“Of course, it hurts,” Gu Fei admitted honestly.

“So why aren’t you reacting?”

Gu Fei simply laughed, “I’m a man after all!”

“Alright. Stop this nonsense,” Luo Luo initially did not know what June’s Rain was doing to Gu Fei, but she quickly stopped them once she heard their exchange.

“There’s a message from Xiaoqi,” Luo Luo told the two.

“What’s the matter?” June’s Rain asked.

“It appears we have obtained a guild quest; she’s calling a

meeting for those who are online,” Luo Luo said.

“Quest? What type of quest?” June’s Rain was so excited that she immediately stood up once she heard the word “quest”. Her reaction was that of an absolute quest fanatic.

“Let’s head back and take a look,” Luo Luo stood up and headed toward the door. June’s Rain rushed forth as well, before turning around and staring at the still seated Gu Fei, “Hey, why are you still seating there?”

“What? Do I have to go, too?” Gu Fei was astonished.

“What nonsense, you’re a member of our guild now!”

“Fine, I’m going!” Gu Fei figured since he had nothing going on, he might as well come along. Gu Fei got up but then remembered that Fireball had originally asked him out. He wondered if he had something planned. Looking back at Fireball, he asked, “Are you alright?”

Fireball looked visibly disappointed, shaking his head as he said, “I’m fine. It’s nothing. Go ahead, Drunk bro.”

Gu Fei nodded. When Fireball saw the two ladies turn around, he immediately bolted toward Gu Fei, “Call me if anything good happens!”

“Naturally,” Gu Fei laughed.

The two women headed out of the tavern and made their way toward where Amethyst Rebirth’s guild house was located. No one spoke a word while they walked. Suddenly, June’s Rain started rocking back and forth, laughing raucously.

“What?” Gu Fei and Luo Luo were puzzled.

“That guy – That guy’s name is Fireball. Ha ha ha ha ha! That’s funny!” June’s Rain was almost in tears.

What sort of brain does she have! Gu Fei lamented.

Xiaoyu(小雨) - is the nickname of June's Rain (六月的雨).

G.I.R.L. - stands for Guy in Real Life.

Chapter 32 - The Legendary Teammate

The people inside the Amethyst Rebirth's guild house gazed oddly at the three that just entered the conference room together. Everyone had the same thought, Why have these three arrived together?

The guild members clearly got along well with one another as it did not take long for Luo Luo and June's Rain to blend into the crowd and exchange pleasantries with them. Gu Fei felt out of place as he stood there by himself. July was the only one who specially approached and welcomed him, "Come on over!"

Gu Fei nodded. One of the reasons he came here with Luo Luo and June's Rain was because he had received a message from July as well when Luo Luo mentioned that "There's a message from Xiaoqi" earlier.

Otherwise, he would not even bother showing up here no matter how much June's Rain pestered him.

A room full of women was undoubtedly a spectacular sight to behold. Gu Fei thought that this might be the only chance in his lifetime to be alone with so many women inside the same room, unless he barged into a female restroom by mistake.

In all honesty, Gu Fei felt quite awkward with the current situation and slightly regretted coming here. He distanced himself from them and sat down near a window, absentmindedly looking outside from time to time.

July regarded the people inside the room by the side and clapped her hands to get their attention, "Everyone online is actually here. It's amazing that so many of you came considering I have only called once."

"Sis Xiaoqi, what kind of guild quest did you get?" an excited voice could be heard saying this. Gu Fei knew that the speaker was

June's Rain without even looking. Now that he knew she was a woman, he thought her voice was rather girly. Strange. Why didn't it sound girly at all when I wasn't aware of her gender?

"Oh, it's nothing too difficult, but it's still our first guild quest," July replied.

The quests in Parallel World were different from the quests in some MMOs, which were categorized into different levels or clearly classified according to the degree of difficulty. In this game, players would only find out how difficult a quest was after they accepted and explored it for themselves. A quest was something the players would always need to explore on their own. Fortunately, it was the Information Age; people would always share their findings on the forums whenever they did a quest. Hence, the current trend for players was to search through the forums' quests section for relevant information whenever they received an unfamiliar quest before carrying on with it.

July had immediately looked for the relevant information online after receiving the guild quest. She believed that this particular quest would not be a problem for Amethyst Rebirth, considering that a lot of newly established small guilds, with similar or fewer number of members to them, were able to complete it.

Although June's Rain was a quest fanatic, her forte actually lay in individual quests. She had never paid attention to group activities like guild quests before. As a result, she kept on asking stuff after July stated the quest's name.

[Retrieval of the Stolen Treasure Chest]

The quest had a very typical story behind it. Basically, it stated that a treasure chest that had gone missing resurfaced somewhere else, and it was now up to the players to recover it.

July pulled out the regional map that she had prepared from the start and spread it out on the table. She started to brief everyone on the details, "I've checked it online. The treasure chest might be

in one of these seven locations,” July pointed each of the seven areas that had been marked on the map.

“These places are quite far apart,” Luo Luo said.

July nodded and said, “Other players suggested separating the guild members into smaller groups to find the exact spot of the treasure chest before gathering everyone again to act together. That’s what I have in mind as well. Among the guilds that had completed the same quest, there was a guild that succeeded with only six participating members. As for us right now...” July turned around to confirm their number, “There’re fourteen of us, so I believe this won’t be a big deal.”

Gu Fei remained seated and did not join the circle of ladies to look at the map. When he heard July saying how it was possible to succeed with just six people, he was about to say, “I’ll be leaving, then!” But July resumed her speech, “There’re fourteen of us, so let’s divide ourselves into seven groups with two people each. Just enough for searching at the seven different places.”

All the ladies nodded in agreement, and Gu Fei had to swallow back his words.

“Let’s start forming the groups.” Everyone could not help but to turn their eyes toward Gu Fei after hearing July’s words. Frankly speaking, the female players around did not actually discriminate against the male players. Still, it was not acceptable for them to have Gu Fei in their guild when it was decided from the beginning that it would be an all-female guild. Now that they were about to be divided into groups, it was only normal that nobody wanted to be paired with a stranger like Gu Fei.

Of course, July knew well what everyone had in mind. However, it was not worthwhile to delve into such minor matter right now, so she asked Gu Fei instead, “Miles, who do you wish to be paired with?”

When Gu Fei heard that they would be divided into groups, he

had expected himself to be kicked around like a ball. He was even slyly wondering who would be the unlucky one to be paired with him. He never thought that July would be so considerate toward him to actually give him a chance to choose one among all the thirteen ladies!

Gu Fei checked everyone swiftly and stopped when his eyes reached June's Rain. He smiled and said, "I'll form a group with [Xiaoyu!](#)"

"Why – Why me?!" June's Rain bellowed.

"Cause we're brothers!" Gu Fei laughed.

June's Rain was left speechless, and the others looked on with puzzled expressions. Luo Luo was the only one smirking. For a moment, the whole room echoed with laughter as Luo Luo squeezed herself into the crowd and whispered something to all of them.

"Very well, you two will be heading here," July pointed randomly at a spot on the map.

Gu Fei had already pulled the door open, leaving June's Rain with no choice but to head off with Gu Fei toward their destination.

The others had an easy time forming into groups. They were soon seen leaving the guild house as well and making their way to each of the specified locations. Seven different locations, each proportionally placed in seven different directions around Yunduan City. Fortunately, this was a system-generated quest. If it were a player-submitted quest, that player would have been beaten black and blue by the other players who had accepted the quest. They would be thinking something like, You did a great job gathering all this information, but how dare you have us go in these seven separate locations in such unusual places?!

Since it was a quest, June's Rain was visibly filled with

enthusiasm. She did not even look back once and just kept on marching forward once she exited the guild house. Seeing her dauntlessness, Gu Fei felt a little pumped up for the quest as well. He followed behind her while trying to appear imposing. Unfortunately for Gu Fei, he did not look even the least bit imposing with his current appearance. June's Rain equipped her set of combat gear one by one along the way. She gave off a powerful and intimidating aura with the huge axe resting on her shoulder. Her full-body heavy armor revealed nothing but a small part of her face.

As for Gu Fei, he still wore the beginner mage robe. While he might look stylish every time the wind blew against him, he probably only looked foolish in the eyes of the professional gamers. For them, it was highly likely for the wind to blow Gu Fei's awful equipment into scraps given its garbage quality.

The two were strolling along quite gamely when they heard somebody calling them – Gu Fei's name to be exact – from behind.

Turning around, they saw July and another lady that Gu Fei did not know trying to catch up to them.

Gu Fei and June's Rain stopped as July caught up to them. She took something out of her pocket and handed it to Gu Fei, "Here, take this!"

Gu Fei received the item and inspected it. It was a magic staff, which increased Intelligence by 8 points, Spirit by 3 points, and damage output of fire-based spells by 20%. It was a nice weapon for Mage, yet Gu Fei thoughtlessly blurted out, "The Attack is so low!"

"Low?" With a puzzled expression, July took the staff back and had another look at it.

The two did not seem to be on the same wavelength, as the Mage Gu Fei was the one who actually made a fuss about the staff's Physical Attack instead of the Fighter July. Appraising the magic staff, its maximum and minimum attack was clearly displayed.

Unfortunately, no matter how high its grade was, Gu Fei would still consider his broken common-grade sword with a higher Physical Attack to be better. The Magic Attack was what mattered most in magic staves, and this particular one did not actually possess a low Magic Attack. In fact, it was already considered a high-grade Mage weapon on the current market.

“What about the one you’re using? Let me take a look,” July felt curious as to what kind of wondrous magic staff Gu Fei was using. It would have been better if he had said that the magic staff did not provide a good boost in stats for the wielder, yet he actually complained about its “low Physical Attack”.

“Can’t show you. It’s broken,” Gu Fei said. He was referring to his sword. The two were definitely not operating on the same wavelength.

“Well, make do with this one for now!” July coldly handed the staff back to him.

“Okay...” Gu Fei took the magic staff with a look of reluctance. July was dumbfounded by his attitude. Even if the magic staff was inferior to the one he had previously used, it was still a high-grade weapon. To think that Gu Fei actually accepted the weapon as if he had been wronged. Actually, July decided to give him this magic staff when she noticed that he was wearing trash equipment after using Appraisal on him. In the end, Gu Fei did not even thank her.

“Alright, get moving!” July waved at Gu Fei and June’s Rain as she left in another direction together with the other lady.

Gu Fei and June’s Rain continued toward their destination as well. The Warrior clad in heavy armor could be seen walking in front with a huge axe resting on her shoulder, while walking closely behind her was what seemed to be a beginner Mage carrying a magic staff on his shoulder as well. The two swaggered through the streets until they left Yunduan City. June’s Rain suddenly stopped walking and turned around, asking Gu Fei who

was behind her, “Which way are we going?”

Gu Fei despaired beyond all reasons. He suddenly felt that he had made a huge mistake by choosing to pair up with her. However, it was too late for regrets now. Gu Fei could only ask her feebly, “Aren’t you the one who actually looked at the map?”

“Nonsense! I don’t even know how to look at a map!” June’s Rain said that righteously.

“Well, I don’t know how either!” Gu Fei refrained from saying that he did not actually see the map at all.

June’s Rain seemed to have finally found someone she could relate to. She asked, “So what do we do now?”

“We ask the others,” Gu Fei felt mentally drained as he pulled out his friends list to send July a message.

July replied to them shortly, pointing them toward the direction they should be heading to.

“Let’s go!” Gu Fei said as he resumed walking. This time, however, he was the one walking in front and June’s Rain was the one following behind.

The location July directed them to was called Yunjiao Lakeside. The ‘Yun’ referred to Yunduan City, and there was a lake called Yunjiao Lake at that area. By combining the name together, it would mean something like ‘a lake by the outskirts of Yunduan City’, which was considerably straightforward.

Gu Fei naturally knew where it was. The problem was that June’s Rain had led him outside Yunduan City using the wrong gate from the start. Now, they had to take a big detour to reach their designated destination.

Gu Fei sighed deeply as he remembered a saying: “Fear not the god-like opponents but the pig-like teammates.”

He had a hunch that he had just met a pig-like teammate told in

the legends. The latest quest got off to a bad start.

Xiaoyu (小雨) - is the nickname of June's Rain (六月的雨).

Chapter 33 - Yunjiao Lakeside

The lakeside by the city's outskirts looked scenic and picturesque. It was definitely a great spot to have a romantic date. Although the players were all still stuck at level 30, they were making great strides in matters of the heart. Yunjiao Lakeside was definitely thriving with this sort of people. In fact, any players would have to watch their steps when they walked by the lakeside given the many couples lazing on the grassy areas.

Gu Fei would not put it past June's Rain to step on a couple or two given that she was a natural airhead. Indeed, she had already stepped right between a couple not long after entering the region. "Watch where you're going! Can't you see there're people lying here?!"

The two were startled and repeatedly apologized as they took a detour.

Gu Fei became extremely careful afterward. He even used the high-grade magic staff like a blind man's walking aid, shifting it about the tall grass and bushes as he called out, "Is anyone there?!"

There were no longer any incidents after the lovebirds from before as the people within the tall grass and bushes changed locations upon hearing his call and seeing the stick he was wildly beating about. Gu Fei and June's Rain finally made their way to the lake.

The lake calmly rippled with cerulean water, appearing pristine and well-maintained. There were rumors that some players had begun researching what crafting skills were necessary to enable shipbuilding. Good business opportunities would definitely become available once a small jetty was built by the lakeside and industrious players carved out some boats for rental purposes.

Just as Gu Fei was appreciating the view, June's Rain beside him broke the tranquility as she hollered, "Ah! Treasure chest, where

are you?!”

Treasure chest! Countless ears perked up within the tall grassy fields after hearing these words. Pairs of eyes flashed and stared at the two that had just arrived.

Gu Fei looked around. Since the quest was to retrieve a treasure chest, monsters would most likely be protecting it. A sparse number of monsters were still roaming in the vicinity of the lakeside. Considering that the place was akin to a lover’s district in-game, not many players went here to grind on monsters, thus leaving the NPCs largely untouched. Gu Fei’s eyes continued to travel around and found no traces of a spot where monsters particularly gathered.

“Let’s just go around and search!” Left with no choice, they could only forge their way ahead to what appeared to be a small group of monsters. Many others stealthily followed behind and kept watch on the two who had mentioned a treasure chest a while ago.

“Nope!”

“Not here!”

“Can’t find it here either!”

June’s Rain cleared the monsters while shouting in vexation as she went.

June’s Rain was a level 30 Warrior who focused on Strength, allowing her to make short work of the low-level monsters in the vicinity with just a few chops of her axe without Gu Fei’s assistance. Gu Fei concentrated on searching around nearby. Although he failed to find the treasure, he did manage to poke out two more couples from within the tall grass.

In no time, the two had already made their way halfway around the lake. Those players who were crawling behind them had mostly left since there were still no signs of the treasure chest after all this time. Gu Fei had long since felt disheartened by this whole

process even though June's Rain was still in high spirits. Her morale did not diminish even a single bit since they left the guild house. Gu Fei suddenly felt a kindred connection with this lady as her obsession with quests in online games was quite similar to his obsession with kung fu!

June's Rain continued to search for the treasure chest, while conscientiously eliminating the monsters and ripping off the tall grass. Gu Fei had already begun to slack off, casually using his staff to probe the area around him while yawning from time to time. Laziness had taken root within him. It was similar to what regular players felt when they had spent a certain amount of time grinding on the same monsters in one spot.

Suddenly, June's Rain shouted, "It's over here!"

"Where?" Gu Fei's interest was rekindled since finding the treasure chest would signal the end of the quest.

June's Rain happily pointed toward the bushes halfway up the hill ahead. A treasure chest really sat on the sawn off stump of a great tree, yet there was not one monster in sight.

That's it? Gu Fei wondered, Didn't July mention something about notifying everyone to gather so that we could all snatch the treasure chest away? Is there even a need for that when one could carry it home just like what Xiaoyu is doing right now?

As she went ahead to grab the chest, the bushes behind her suddenly rustled as a few figures rushed toward the treasure chest as well.

"Crap! It's an ambush! What cunning monsters!" June's Rain shouted.

They were not monsters but rather players who had trailed behind them. Gu Fei was well aware of the bunch of players crawling behind him and June's Rain. He had a fair grasp of their intentions as well. However, he assumed that since the treasure

chest was their quest item then it could only be obtained after going through the quest. Never did he imagine that the chest would just sit on a tree stump, tempting everyone who saw it.

June's Rain was the closest to the chest. However, she clearly had a difficult time rushing uphill with her suit of heavy armor. The others caught up to her just as she clanked away in those few steps. Gu Fei came forward and extended his magic staff with one hand and struck to his left and right in a practiced motion, smacking the two players with resounding slaps each.

Utilizing the magic staff in such a way could only cause a scant amount of damage, but it still managed to startle the two people that just got hit. Having crawled behind Gu Fei and June's Rain all this time, they had used Appraisal on Gu Fei for more than one hundred and eighty times out of boredom and already determined his job class to be Mage. They were expecting something like burning flames from Gu Fei when he charged toward them, yet they were whacked on their heads with a magic staff instead.

As the two stood rooted on the spot in a muddle, another pair had used the opportunity to get past them. Although Gu Fei was a full-Agility Mage with a decent amount of speed, it was still nothing compared to the Thieves' speed. Seeing that he had no way of catching up to them, he reached into his pocket, took out a meat carving knife, and threw it at a target. The person on the left was struck by the knife, screaming in pain. He reached for his back and plucked the knife out from his butt, just as he stood there stunned, Just what is this skill?

Right then, Gu Fei already retrieved a second knife and began to aim at the person on the right.

Just as this player was about to gleefully get past June's Rain, her arm had unexpectedly shot out and reached toward the player's collar. That Thief whirled his dagger instinctively to slash at June's Rain, yet the attack did not even scratch her as she was wearing the heavy armor. She then lifted her arm and heaved,

tossing the flailing Thief toward the lake with a splash.

Gu Fei broke out in cold sweat, thinking how scary the violent Warrior was. The strength in that arm had already surpassed any normal human standards, and yet she was only at level 30. If this continued on, her strength in the later levels would be unimaginable.

The two players who were smacked silly by Gu Fei with the magic staff had recovered and began to make their move. After confirming that they had not suffered any grievous injuries, they hastily continued to rush forward to the chest. Gu Fei shouted at June's Rain, "I'll block them. Go grab that treasure chest," and then he wheeled around to engage the two players.

As the players realized that the magic staff in Gu Fei's hand could not deal any significant damage on them, they did not even bother dodging it. In fact, they sought to take the blow head on and break through it.

Gu Fei, who was proficient in kung fu, readied to counter all the incoming attacks from the players. Yet, he had not expected to encounter such an ungraceful fighting style commonly seen in online games. Being alone and lacking the proper strength to endure the tackle from his two opponents, Gu Fei was knocked off the ground even as he swung his staff on one of them.

"You dumb*ss!" June's Rain witnessed the whole thing and decided to assist Gu Fei instead of picking up the treasure chest.

Just as Gu Fei's back was about to hit the ground, he bent his waist and twisted in the air. He extended the magic staff once more and executed a horizontal swipe, viciously striking the two's feet in the process.

"OUCH! ARGHH!" Sharp screams were heard from the two as they were swept off their feet. The damage was not much so they prepared to get up, but Gu Fei flipped himself upright way faster than them. Gu Fei picked up the magic staff and performed a swift

swipe on the two players, sweeping their feet off the ground once more, “What’re you two doing rushing all over the place and knocking people over? I especially despise people who fight without any expertise!”

Despite the weak physique Gu Fei possessed in-game, he had remained nimble and even emitted a fierce aura. Any movement he spotted was immediately met with a blow from the magic staff.

After a few quick strikes, the two players no longer dared to raise their heads. Gu Fei’s magic staff only stopped hitting them when they were essentially tamed and no longer moved, meekly lying on the ground. He looked back and could not find where June’s Rain threw the person Gu Fei had skewered with his carving knife before. She was happily bounding toward the chest right now.

Gu Fei suddenly noticed movement from the bush near the wooden stump and he immediately shouted out a warning, “Be careful, there’s still someone around!”

“Ah?” June’s Rain’s reaction was rather slow. Taking advantage of the momentary opening when she paused, a person from the bush dove straight toward the treasure chest.

Gu Fei felt irked. He should not have called out June’s Rain, as without that moment of distraction, she would have probably managed to grab the chest by now. The opening created by Gu Fei’s shout and the following pause of the silly girl made it possible for the person to grab the chest right in front of their eyes.

The situation they were now in made Gu Fei endlessly annoyed. At that same instant, the sound of rushing air swiftly came from afar and the person who had dived for the chest turned into a flash of white light.

“What’s going on?!” Gu Fei was shocked.

June’s Rain’s next reaction was actually incredibly quick as she immediately lay prone on the ground and hid behind the wooden

stump, shouting toward Gu Fei, “Quickly crawl your way over here. It’s Snipe!”

Gu Fei nimbly lay on the ground and he crawled toward the previously subdued two players, as he muttered doubtfully, “Snipe?”

“It’s an Archer’s level 30 skill. While the damage isn’t as great as a Mage’s Repeating Fireball, Thief’s Backstab, or a Warrior’s Cyclone, its attack range is incredibly frightening. It’s essentially twice the attack range of a normal attack. You could only be shot at by the Archer, and it’s impossible to find out where the Archer is shooting from,” the person lying on the ground next to Gu Fei hurriedly explained.

“Can’t see him? Is that so?” Gu Fei smiled.

Chapter 34 - Ten Percent Chance of a Fatal Blow

The lakeside on the outskirts of Yunduan City was silent. Nobody, even the ones hiding within the bushes, dared to move. The two players lying on their stomach stared at Gu Fei who had a weird smile on his face.

“I’m Thousand Miles Drunk. Sorry for what happened earlier,” Gu Fei said to the two.

They exchanged glances.

“My name’s Fei Lian,” said the person on the left.

“I’m Ascension,” said the one on the right.

“Nice to meet you both!” Gu Fei extended his hand and shook each of their proffered hands.

The two players did not know each other prior to this, so they exchanged greetings as well. The bushes they were in shook as they introduced themselves to one another, looking absolutely impure from afar. June’s Rain, who was still hiding behind the tree stump, was pure-minded, yet even she had to ask out of curiosity, “What’re you three doing? Stop fighting already!”

“It’s nothing! We’re cool now! We’re not that stupid to fight in a situation like this!” Ascension said to June’s Rain as he waved his hand.

Unfortunately, he had raised his hand too high. His hand was like a beacon of light in the darkness, revealing their position clearly to the Archer. An arrow unerringly flew toward them.

“Ughhh!” Ascension reached back and touched the arrow that had struck his waist, looking at his HP, “I’m dead.” He really did die after saying these words.

“Move!” Gu Fei shouted toward Fei Lian.

“What are you shouting at me for?!” Fei Lian was stunned. He only managed to react again after he saw Gu Fei quickly roll to the side. However, he was a bit slower in diving to the side, resulting in an arrow piercing him exactly on his right shoulder. Following that one arrow, a few more arrows flew and struck the spot that they were on mere seconds ago.

Gu Fei stayed still on the ground as he turned his head, “You alright?” He had seen the kind of damage Snipe could cause. Anyone who took two arrows consecutively would be killed for sure.

“Yes!” Fei Lian gritted his teeth as he answered, “The last arrow’s not under Snipe, so the damage it dealt is not very high.”

“Oh? Why didn’t the Archer use it?” Gu Fei asked.

“Snipe has a long cool-down time, so it’s impossible to shoot arrows with it continuously,” Fei Lian answered.

“You sure know a lot!” Gu Fei complimented.

“That’s because I’m also an Archer,” Fei Lian replied.

“Oh? Why didn’t you use Snipe on that person as well?” Gu Fei queried.

“I’m not at level 30 yet!” Fei Lian lamented.

Gu Fei could only sigh after hearing his words.

“Plus!” Fei Lian was not finished yet, “Even the regular arrow that person just shot me with dealt high damage. It means that Archer’s equipment is top grade.”

A level 30 player fully equipped with high-grade equipment was indubitably the peak state anyone could currently be in the game. It seemed like Gu Fei had chanced upon a formidable and troublesome opponent today. Gu Fei sneaked a peek up the hill. Besides the first arrow catching him by surprise, Gu Fei saw all the succeeding shots the opponent had made. The arrows might be

swift, but his eyes were still far quicker.

Because he could clearly see each attack, Gu Fei was certain that Snipe not only had a long attack range but a fast speed as well. However, the few regular arrows the Archer had shot them with indicated that the person was not hiding within the Snipe's maximum range. This also meant that the opponent used Snipe at a closer distance to them. Meaning, it would be much harder to dodge. Gu Fei was confident that he could dodge if it was merely a normal arrow shot. However, it would be almost impossible to do so if it was Snipe.

“What's the cool-down time for Snipe?” Gu Fei asked Fei Lian.

“Official website says it's forty-five seconds,” Fei Lian replied, “But that still varies for each individual. We don't know if the Archer has equipment that reduces waiting period. Rumors said boosting Spirit stat can reduce cool-down time for skills too.”

“Forty-five seconds...” Gu Fei muttered. Forty-five seconds already passed since their opponent had last used Snipe, so poking his head out now would simply result in getting one-shot killed.

Gu Fei needed their opponent to shoot one more arrow to pinpoint the Archer's exact location. If he knew their opponent's firing target, then he would be able to determine which trajectory the arrow came from. He had a rough idea of the attacker's direction from the movement of the wind, but what he needed to know was the Archer's exact hiding spot.

“Xiaoyu,” Gu Fei added June's Rain to his friends list and privately messaged her.

“What?”

“How high is your defense?” Gu Fei asked.

Xiaoyu reported the number accordingly, “Why are you asking?”

Gu Fei did not reply to her right away, but instead turned to ask Fei Lian, “How much damage did that normal arrow deal to you?”

Fei Lian checked his HP and told him the number, while inquiring as well, “Why are you asking?”

“How much will Snipe increase the damage by?” Gu Fei asked.

“I think it’s 100%, which is twice that of a normal attack. But there’s also a chance of it being a Fatal Blow,” Fei Lian answered.

“Fatal Blow?”

“It ignores the opponent’s defense and directly deals damage based on the target’s amount of HP. Snipe has a 10% chance of causing a Fatal Blow at zero proficiency, resulting in a 10% increase in fatal damage. I’m not sure how much the skill effect will increase when the proficiency is higher,” Fei Lian explained.

Gu Fei furrowed his brows. He had forgotten to consider a person’s skill proficiency. This meant that calculating the exact damage the skill would deal was impossible. If he was to calculate using the highest level of proficiency... Unfortunately, Parallel World had just begun and only the data for the earlier stages of job classes was revealed. As none of the players had achieved high level of proficiency, there was no data for Gu Fei to base his calculations on.

“Xiaoyu, what’s your total HP?” Gu Fei asked once more.

Based on the data reported to him, Gu Fei did some mental calculations and sighed. June’s Rain was not wearing any particularly top-grade equipment and given the current circumstance, there was a high possibility of her dying if the opponent managed to score a Fatal Blow with Snipe. Without the Fatal Blow, she would be left with just a sliver of HP. However, if the current opponent’s proficiency with Snipe was higher, that person could not only increase the skill’s base damage by 100%, it could also climb up higher, like maybe 118%, which would outright kill June’s Rain without it needing to be a Fatal Blow.

“What, do you want to block the arrow?” Fei Lian had guessed

Gu Fei's train of thoughts.

"Not me. Her," Gu Fei indicated June's Rain.

"What then?" Fei Lian asked.

"Then we will know the Archer's position and sort that person out," Gu Fei said.

Fei Lian looked at Gu Fei incredulously. He spoke as if once he knew the Archer's hiding place, he could take care of the person without an issue. Had he not mentioned previously how the opponent was at level 30 and wore top of the line equipment? Furthermore....

"You still have to close in on that person! Are your Mage spells able to be casted from a longer distance than a bow? A slight movement from us is enough for that Archer to shoot an arrow here. How can you get past that?" Fei Lian asked.

Gu Fei laughed, "Precisely. I'll move the instant a slight movement occurs."

Fei Lian was puzzled. Gu Fei did not bother to clarify his point, while Xiaoyu inquired from the other side, "Why did you ask about my defense stat and total HP?"

"I have a plan," Gu Fei explained, "I've calculated the Archer's damage versus your defense stat and total HP. There's a 90% chance that you could withstand an arrow from that person, and 10% chance that you would be killed instantly."

"Oh! I'll finish the Archer off, then! Since our opponent won't be able to insta-kill me, I can rush over and cleave that person with my axe," Xiaoyu said.

"And how will you get that chance to close in on the Archer? Even if you're not dead with the first shot, the second one will guarantee your death," Gu Fei could not believe what he had just heard.

“Oh, yeah...” Xiaoyu said, “So what do we do now?”

“You should go attract that person’s attention. I’ll approach from the other side and attempt a sneak attack,” Gu Fei said.

“You’re despicable!” Xiaoyu exclaimed.

“I’m not! This is a tactic; a misdirection, get it?” Gu Fei said, feeling exasperated.

“And what if I get insta-killed?” Xiaoyu asked.

Gu Fei was afraid of this question. He embarrassedly answered her, “I’ll still find out the Archer’s position and avenge you.”

“That’s great! Let’s do it, then!” Xiaoyu affirmed the plan.

What a gullible woman. Had it been anyone else, they would have been filled with suspicion and doubt on the feasibility of a Mage taking down a level 30 Archer with exceptional gear. Previously, Gu Fei was cudgeling his brains out on how to convince her. Never would he have thought that she would readily agree to his arrangement.

“Wait for my signal to stand. Just lie there for now,” Gu Fei said.

“Understood.”

As everything around him turned silent, Gu Fei stealthily lay prone among the tall grass and waited for an opportunity. Fei Lian beside him had no idea that Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had already discussed a battle plan. He whistled to call Gu Fei’s attention, making him turn his head to look at him.

“Are you ready?” Fei Lian asked.

“Just lie down there!” Gu Fei smiled

It was at this moment that the calm lake rippled as the mountain breeze blew past its surface to the shore, making the thick grass sway.

“Get up!” Gu Fei timely sent the order to Xiaoyu.

Xiaoyu stood up with her armor clanking and an arrow swiftly cut through the air toward her. Although she quickly retreated back to her hiding spot, she was not fast enough to dodge the shot. Xiaoyu was hiding behind the tree stump away from Gu Fei and Fei Lian, yet the Archer clearly monitored her position as well.

“Ah, crap! She’s...” Fei Lian turned his head and shouted, “Hey, where are you?”

Gu Fei, who was right beside him a moment ago, had disappeared. All that was left was a patch of crushed grass where Gu Fei had once lain. He now understood what Gu Fei meant when he said he would move right when there was a slight movement. The opposing Archer would not be able to determine their location when the breeze stirred up all the grass at once.

This moment could be used to run away as well, yet Gu Fei had chosen to confront a level 30 fully geared Archer alone instead. Fei Lian shifted his gaze about and spotted Xiaoyu. It appeared that she was lucky enough to avoid that 10% Fatal Blow, so she hid herself behind the tree stump again.

Fei Lian began to think for a bit. They could definitely use that moment when the wind whipped through the tall grass to escape. However, this was not possible for the female Warrior as the tree stump was surrounded by an open space. Gu Fei probably wanted to take down that Archer so that the Warrior could escape. But it seemed rather contradictory if that was his plan because he had asked her to be the bait for the Archer.

Gu Fei already managed to make his way around the back of the hill. He had clearly identified the Archer’s location from that arrow just now. At the same time, he was very pleased to see that Xiaoyu had managed to survive. Now, all he had to do was take care of this sniping player.

As of the moment, Gu Fei could clearly see a male figure darting within the trees on top of the hill. The Archer was cunning enough

to understand the importance of changing location with every shot he took. It was a pity, however, that a more cunning person had actually made his way behind him.

Chapter 35 - Bludgeon

The Archer was truly devious for coming up with such a stratagem. While the others merely trailed behind Gu Fei and June's Rain after overhearing the two's talk about a nearby treasure chest, this person had actually taken a vantage point and readied himself to snipe the players from afar. Such an action nauseated Gu Fei.

Gu Fei's plan of action was to perform a sneak attack on this Archer personally, giving him a taste of his own medicine.

The wind was still howling so the sound of the rustling grass hid Gu Fei's footfalls. He lowered himself onto the tall grass and shimmied forward, his eyes not once leaving the Archer's figure. The person jogged up a small path on top of the hill, immediately drawing back his bow and staying still once he finished changing his position.

That's a pretty good move! Gu Fei was very impressed. The Archer seemed like a masterful hunter awaiting his prey with immeasurable patience. This was actually beneficial to Gu Fei, however. If the Archer had been someone unprofessional and was busy looking all over, he might have already been discovered!

Gu Fei slowly made his way closer to the opponent with his steps being masked by the wind. When he finally arrived right behind the Archer, the person had yet to discover his presence and was still rigidly staring downhill. Gu Fei casually followed his gaze and saw the treasure chest on top of that tree stump, as well as the spot where Fei Lian and him were previously huddling among the tall grass.

Gu Fei revealed a sinister smile as he raised his magic staff high and brought it down heavily on the target with a whoosh.

The whooshing sound finally alerted the Archer that something was off behind him. But before he could turn around, the magic

staff had already struck him right in the neck artery. The neck artery was an acupuncture point, so not much force was needed to induce a state of unconsciousness by hitting it. It should be possible to do something like rendering a person unconscious in this VRMMO given how realistic it was. Nevertheless, there existed a possibility that the strike Gu Fei had landed would be calculated using the game algorithm, which meant his Strength might not be enough to cause an opponent to faint. As such, Gu Fei quickly threw in a kick as well after the Archer took the blow to the neck, with the intention of knocking him down and allowing Gu Fei to better shaft the opponent all over his body.

The Archer was standing just at the edge of a slope leading downhill. Although he swiftly reacted to the sound of movement behind him, he was still slower than Gu Fei who had already caused him to fall and roll down the hill with a kick. His head slammed into the trees multiple times as he rolled down. Gu Fei was worried that the Archer would turn into an idiot by the time he finished his roll downhill. Yet, he was more worried that his inertia of rolling down the hill would cause him to fall straight into the lake. He quickly pulled out his friends list and contacted Xiaoyu, "Someone's coming. Catch him."

"Who?" Xiaoyu asked.

"The person that shot you," Gu Fei said.

In the next moment, Xiaoyu's head peeked out from the tree stump as Gu Fei waved his hands at her. Seeing that she had no reaction, he quickly sent another message, "Just stand there and wait. He's coming soon."

With that, Gu Fei hastily began to make his way downhill.

Xiaoyu stood by the tree stump and looked about. In no time, she spotted something rolling toward her from up the hill. Is that the one Miles was referring to? Xiaoyu focused and tried to identify what it was. Once she confirmed that it was a person, she hopped

over and stomped her other leg on that rolling body and finally stopped it. She sent a message over to Gu Fei, “Got him.”

The person who got stomped on had no reaction at all. It was apparent that his trip downhill had caused him to faint after his head forcefully met too many trees along the way.

“Okay!” Gu Fei messaged back as he kept running down. Xiaoyu was looking toward his direction and when she saw a figure making its way over, she blurted out in shock, “There’s still another!”

June’s Rain had just taken that Snipe from before. Even though she had rested while hiding behind the tree stump, her HP had yet to recover fully. Meeting another enemy at this juncture would be very disadvantageous. Fei Lian had seen the movement from his side as well, so he immediately got up from the bush he had been hiding in. Now that Xiaoyu saw she had assistance, she immediately shouted without even caring who the person was, “Come quick! There’s still someone here!”

Fei Lian was naturally surprised as he quickly took out his bow and rushed out. Upon seeing that there was a figure rushing down the hill, he let loose an arrow.

Gu Fei was already close enough to make out the two’s faces and was about to call them. He did not realize that they could not see him clearly due to the poor lighting the trees provided, resulting in Fei Lian sending an arrow straight at him.

Gu Fei hurriedly dodged to the side, while reaching out with his hand and catching the arrow. He shouted in exasperation, “It’s me!”

“Oh!” Xiaoyu recognized Gu Fei’s voice and quickly stopped Fei Lian, “Don’t shoot. He’s one of us.”

Fei Lian did not even think of letting loose another arrow as he froze in place. He had not considered the possibility of someone

having the ability to catch an arrow in flight!

Once Gu Fei got out of the trees, he met up with the two and passed the arrow in his hand back to Fei Lian. He smiled toward them and said, “It’s over.”

Fei Lian rigidly took the arrow without another word. Xiaoyu did not even note these details and was only happily cheering, “Treasure chest! Treasure chest!” She went ahead and hugged the said object, “We’ve finally completed the quest.”

“Quest?” Fei Lian blinked in realization.

“Yup. This is our guild quest; retrieve the stolen treasure chest,” Xiaoyu picked up the treasure chest high up in the air.

Fei Lian’s face revealed a look of dejection. Had he known that it was a quest item, he would not have wasted so much effort in fighting for it! However, he remembered his initial ill intentions, If not for the Archer’s assault that caused me to work together with these two... As Fei Lian thought up to this point, he involuntarily retreated a step.

Gu Fei did not seem to hold a grudge against him. As for Xiaoyu, she was a simpleton so she had long forgotten about the matter. In the end, these two did not even bother with his existence. Seeing that they had no intention to fight him, he heaved a sigh of relief and looked at the player under Xiaoyu’s feet.

This person was an Archer just like him, except he was decked out in top-grade equipment. Fei Lian gulped audibly.

“Fei Lian, aren’t you an Archer? Why don’t you check to see if there’s any equipment on him that you could use?” Gu Fei asked.

“What?” Fei Lian was absolutely taken aback by this, Did I hear it right? Although the two were not Archers, this was still top-grade equipment they were talking about! They could easily loot the equipment, sell each in the market, and take the profit to purchase their own top-grade equipment!

Fei Lian stared at Gu Fei and Xiaoyu, yet the two had not even bothered to reply to him.

Xiaoyu was busy inspecting the treasure chest she was holding, trying her best to open it.

“Why can’t I open it?!” Xiaoyu complained as she raised the chest and bashed it against the tree stump a few times.

“Stop bashing it. Let me have a look,” Gu Fei went over to her and helped as well. Fei Lian was stunned. Did these two really care that little about the top-grade equipment and were alright with leaving everything to him?

Xiaoyu had already kicked the Archer to one side. Fei Lian carefully knelt beside the body as he took another look at them. They were still busying themselves with the chest!

Fei Lian finally felt at ease and boldly searched the unconscious Archer’s body, taking a hold of that bow right into his hands first.

“Maybe there’s no way to open it right now since it’s a quest item,” Gu Fei could not find the mechanism that might open the chest after spending quite some time on it. After his explanation, he turned to see Fei Lian searching the Archer’s body.

“Wait...” Gu Fei said.

I knew it! Fei Lian fumed, You should’ve just told me up front that you didn’t want to share the loot! Why even let me experience a moment of happiness when you didn’t intent to make it last! You clearly wanted to torture me first. I was even starting to think you’re generous! Fei Lian was pissed off, but in the end the spoils did not belong to him. Having no say in this, he could only step aside as his face darkened.

“This guy, I know him...” Gu Fei grimaced.

“Ah?” Fei Lian was surprised.

“Royal God Call,” Gu Fei said.

“That name sounds familiar...” Fei Lian was after all an experienced player.

“He played Mages before,” Gu Fei said.

“Oh, yeah! You’re right!” Fei Lian nodded, “So that famous person is actually this guy?”

Gu Fei nodded.

“Let’s wake him up first! Xiaoyu, carry him over to the lakeside,” Gu Fei said.

“Why couldn’t you do it yourself?” June’s Rain was still busy tinkering with the treasure chest.

“As if I can do it,” Gu Fei laughed forcefully. Saying this sentence made him feel ashamed. It’s all this game’s fault! Gu Fei had to console himself with this thought.

“Hmph. Fine, I’ll do it,” Xiaoyu walked over proudly, carrying Royal God Call with one hand and asking as she made her way to the lakeside, “You said you know this guy?”

Why is this girl’s train of thought late by a beat?! Gu Fei nodded as he lamented in his head.

“Then why did he shoot us?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Maybe it’s a misunderstanding. Let’s just wake him up first.” As the three got to the lakeside, Xiaoyu threw Royal God Call onto the ground and Gu Fei splashed the unconscious man with lake water. Fei Lian suddenly thought of an important question, That Royal God Call actually fainted?! How did Gu Fei manage to do that? There was currently no skill that could cause a fainting state. Even if there were, the game’s faint status and a human that fainted were two separate things altogether. The former should only result in the player entering a trance.

Royal God Call finally woke up with that splash of water. He immediately rolled away once he recovered; his hand had already

taken ahold of his bow and nocked an arrow. At this same moment, the water that had entered his nose made him sneeze a couple of times.

“Chill. It’s me,” Gu Fei said calmly.

“Ah, Miles!” Royal God Call recognized Gu Fei.

“What happened?” He kept his bow ready as he stood up. He raised his hand to rub his head full of sore bumps. Even the strike that landed on his neck had caused lingering pain.

“Could it be the level 36 Thief skill, Bludgeon?!” Royal God Call was suddenly at a loss. Even him who spent his days and nights rushing to level up had not reached level 31, and yet there was someone who had apparently reached level 36. It was preposterous!

“Ahem...” Gu Fei coughed once and ignored Royal God Call’s exclamation. He asked instead, “What are you doing here?”

“I’m doing a quest to protect that treasure chest,” he said as he saw Xiaoyu hug the item. He laughed bitterly, “What’s the point of hugging it. It’s just a quest item. There’s nothing inside it. Only players who have received the quest to snatch it back would have a use for it.”

Xiaoyu did not let go of the treasure chest even after hearing his words, and she held on to it even more tightly.

“It couldn’t be that you guys...” Royal God Call was stunned.

“Just what is going on? Do the quests in this game force two groups of players to kill each other?” Although Gu Fei did not have much experience with playing online games, he knew that there were not any in-game quests – except for guild wars and such – that would forcefully put players together in a PvP scenario.

Just as Gu Fei finished his sentence, Xiaoyu exclaimed, “Crap! Sis July and Sis Luo Luo are dead!”

Chapter 36 - An Utter Defeat

It began to drizzle in Yunduan City. Gu Fei and Xiaoyu rushed back to Amethyst Rebirth's headquarters with the treasure chest of the guild quest.

Royal God Call was not really willing to hand over the treasure chest to them just like that. Back then, Xiaoyu was only about ten centimeters away from him. However, he was an Archer that specialized in long-range fights, while Xiaoyu was a Warrior that specialized in melee.

With Xiaoyu in front of him, Royal God Call had to either retreat to the side or the back to lengthen the gap between them. Unfortunately, he also had Gu Fei on his left, Fei Lian on his right, and the deep lake on his back. More importantly, the treasure chest was no longer in his hands....

They eventually ended the standstill by parting ways, and the person holding the chest left with it. There was a tacit understanding among them to forget the whole situation.

At present, Gu Fei felt suffocated by the stifling atmosphere that had settled inside the Amethyst Rebirth's conference room. He casually walked over to the window and pushed open its casements.

All the girls' faces wore a furious look. Their expressions remained unchanged even though Xiaoyu had managed to bring back a treasure chest. This was because everyone had just gone through quite an ordeal. Out of the seven teams that were sent out, only the duo of Gu Fei and Xiaoyu survived. When Xiaoyu shouted out "Sis July and Sis Luo Luo are dead" before, she had actually used them to represent all six teams.

Receiving such a traumatic experience in their first guild quest was seriously heartrending. Gu Fei could somewhat understand what they were feeling at the moment. Whereas male players were

usually hailed as kings in online games, the female players were mostly seen as eye candies. These girls had banded together in hopes of proving themselves, yet they unluckily came across such a difficult hurdle from the get-go.

Someone was bound to snap soon after soaking in their thoughts for so long! Gu Fei closely surveyed the crowd, especially that one lady.

“How despicable!” As Gu Fei had expected, the first one to explode was indeed the Fighter called Lie Lie. She sent a stool flying with her kick, slapped the table, and cursed, “If they had the ability, they should face us for real! Those sneaky f*ckers don’t know how to fight fair!”

After voicing her grievances for almost ten minutes, Gu Fei more or less surmised that Lie Lie had been instantly killed by a stealthy Thief’s Backstab without even catching a glimpse of the opponent’s face. Hence, she strongly condemned the opponent’s fighting method.

Gu Fei could only scoff at her comments with regard to the matter, since he also had executed a sneak attack on Royal God Call a while ago.

While he enjoyed fighting face to face, he did not detest sneak attacks like Lie Lie. Gu Fei even considered such attacks to be on another level as they required a good grasp of the target’s mentality. Ability to grasp at the right opportunity and the strength to execute a decisive strike were needed as well for this sort of attacks to succeed. Therefore, the skill required to insta-kill with sneak attacks was no less difficult than beating an opponent one on one.

Lie Lie’s outburst had stirred up the others’ raging emotions as they began to voice their grievances as well. Gu Fei tried hard to sift through their jabbering to make heads or tails of the entire situation, and he ended up hearing one word the most: insta-kill.

Out of the twelve ladies that went for the guild quest, eleven were insta-killed while the last one was collaterally killed. The last struggler died when a Warrior opponent used Cyclone. She was not originally targeted by that Warrior; however, she had gone up with the intention of helping her guild mate fend off the Warrior. It resulted into them dying to Cyclone instead.

There were other words that were also prominently mentioned by them: Backstab, Cyclone, and Snipe.

Although the ladies did not have high levels, insta-killing them was still not an easy feat. Adding the fact that Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had met Royal God Call, he suddenly thought of three people after hearing the three skill names: Sword Demon, War Without Wounds, and Royal God Call.

Royal God Call could insta-kill players casually, but Gu Fei believed Sword Demon and War Without Wounds would be far deadlier than him.

Sword Demon, whose level of ugliness could make even zombies cry in shock, was easy to describe. But since Thieves usually unleashed Backstab while they were on Stealth, the ladies would have no idea of their killers' features.

Gu Fei suddenly felt as if he was in hot water. If his guess was correct, then he had truly found himself between a rock and a hard place.

Gu Fei was of course more attached to the mercenary group he was in. After all, he did not think he could get along with the members of this all-female guild. Had it not been for the minimum-guild-member-requirement issue, he would have long since left the guild of his own volition. But if he were to consider everything, it would be hard to say who was in the right or wrong as this was a scenario created by the system's quest design.

Parallel World's system was entirely at fault here as it had distributed both quests simultaneously: one requiring the retrieval

of the treasure chests and another requiring the safeguarding of the same chests. Gu Fei unluckily got caught in between the two parties involved.

At the moment, all of this was just a conjecture. It was unclear if the mercenary group was indeed the other party involved in this matter. Gu Fei thought up to this point and suddenly stood up, “I’ve got something on, so I’ll take my leave first.”

All the ladies were still busy with their discussion and hardly paid attention to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei chuckled to himself as he headed toward the door.

“Where are you going?” someone asked all of a sudden.

Gu Fei felt touched when he looked back and saw that it was Xiaoyu who had called after him. Even though she was a little bit ditzy, she at least showed camaraderie now that they had gone through a near-death scenario together. Gu Fei lightly smiled after thinking of all this, “I’ve got something on, so I’ll be going first.” With that, he pulled open the door and left the guild base.

Everyone finally noticed that Gu Fei had left. When they remembered that it was only Gu Fei and Xiaoyu that were victorious in claiming a treasure chest, they crowded around Xiaoyu and started asking her about it.

After leaving the guild, Gu Fei pulled up his friends list and saw that all five members of Young Master’s Elite were online. Gu Fei recalled that ever since he had come to know Sword Demon, he never saw him go offline once. What a pro!

Gu Fei was more familiar with Sword Demon out of the five, so he naturally contacted him first to inquire about their involvement or non-involvement in the issue.

“Where are you?” Gu Fei messaged him.

“Ray’s Bar,” Sword Demon replied.

Ray's Bar was just two streets away, so Gu Fei directly headed toward the establishment.

Gu Fei entered and greeted Ray before he went straight to the room they had all been accustomed to. He lifted the curtains and was startled for a moment. Besides Sword Demon, Young Master Han and Brother Assist were here as well.

"Miles is here!" Brother Assist greeted Gu Fei.

"What a rare guest! Come take a seat!" Young Master Han had always been generous with his snide remarks.

Gu Fei smiled and did not say a word. Sword Demon shifted to the side, making room for him to take a seat.

"Where's Wounds and Royal?" Gu Fei asked.

"Who knows? Probably grinding!" Sword Demon said.

"All you guys do is grind. You don't even know how to enjoy life properly. We play games to enrich our lives, to rejuvenate our drab and lonely spirits; that's the most beautiful indulgence," Young Master Han waxed loquaciously.

"Is he drunk?" Gu Fei asked Sword Demon.

Sword Demon lowered his head and massaged his temples, "That's just how he is."

Gu Fei looked at Sword Demon with sympathy as he continued to ask the three, "No missions today?"

Young Master Han lifted his glass with a smile, "Regular quests are unworthy of our attention."

"What kind of regular quests?" Gu Fei pestered.

"Go to the Hall of Mercenaries and see for yourself!" Young Master Han snapped.

"You didn't take any quest?"

"Are you deaf? Didn't I say so already?" Young Master Han

replied in annoyance.

Gu Fei was stunned for a few moments. This meant that this group was not the one that had ambushed Amethyst Rebirth! Gu Fei sighed in relief as he no longer felt as if he was caught between the two groups. Gu Fei did not care to find out the actual group behind the ambush. This was just a game after all! Killing and fighting were everyday occurrences. Moreover, this was probably a system-generated quest in which two groups were pitted against each other. It was not done out of spite or malice. In the end, Amethyst Rebirth failed the quest because the ladies' skills were below par.

If they wanted revenge, then that would be something for another time. Besides, he was not certain that they would want him in the guild for that long!

Gu Fei finally relaxed as he lifted the curtain and shouted, "Ray, bring me a glass!"

The three in the room could not make sense of Gu Fei's sudden look of elation. Young Master Han latched on to this as he said carefully, "Why are you glad when you heard we're not on a mission?"

"I'm not happy because of that," Gu Fei explained.

"What's going on?" Young Master Han asked, "You're acting a little weird today."

"How so?" Gu Fei asked.

"You don't come here if you have nothing in mind," Young Master Han stated.

"What?" Gu Fei quickly said, "I just want to hang out with everyone!" Gu Fei had no intentions of telling them about the issue. Doing so would mean telling them about how he became Amethyst Rebirth's member as well. Gu Fei was unlike Fireball in this matter. He did not consider mingling with a bunch of ladies as

a wonderful thing, so it was something best left unsaid.

“What do you mean hang out? We’re not exactly that close,” Young Master Han remarked.

“D*mn, you’re being way too straightforward!” Gu Fei felt depressed. It was true that they had barely known one another for three days, and that this was just the third time they had met, but to say such things so bluntly was rather rude.

Sword Demon shook his head as he mumbled, “That’s just how he is.”

“Sword Demon, if you’ve got something to say, say it out loud!” Young Master Han smacked the table.

Sword Demon shook his head once more, “That’s just how I am.”

Gu Fei finally realized that there was something off with Sword Demon, so he suddenly asked, “What’s going on here?”

Brother Assist grimaced, “Can’t you tell? They have had too much to drink.”

“F*ck!” Gu Fei felt foolish, “Then, why are you still with them?”

“They won’t let me out! They got me sandwiched between them,” Brother Assist smiled weakly.

Gu Fei stood up, “Sword Demon, Ray has got drinks for you!”

“Oh, I’m coming,” Sword Demon stood up and shuffled out unsteadily.

“Let’s go!” Gu Fei indicated the way out with his head.

“That was easy!” Brother Assist sighed.

“Actually, I have something I wish to ask you,” Gu Fei frankly said as he and Brother Assist walked out of the room, randomly picked a seat by the bar, and sat down.

Chapter 37 - The Information Expert

Young Master Han's loud shout could be heard from within the room, "Sword Demon, if you've got something to say, say it out loud!"

Sword Demon was not in the room anymore, however. Instead, he was leaning over the bar counter and pestering Ray, "Where're my drinks? You called me over to give them, right? Hand them over!"

Ray smiled wryly as he looked toward Gu Fei and Brother Assist, knowing they were all friends.

Brother Assist was about to stand up when Gu Fei stopped him. He looked around and spotted two Warriors sitting at a table nearby, both wearing beginner's equipment.

"Hey, fellas!" Gu Fei called the two.

They turned their heads.

"Do me a favor! Throw that guy by the counter in the back alley. I'm a Mage and I don't have the strength to do it," Gu Fei pointed at Sword Demon as he spoke to them.

The two barely registered his words and remained seated.

Gu Fei thought for a moment before taking out two gold coins, "Please help!"

The two Warriors' eyes twinkled. They did not care whether he was a Mage or not. What they cared for was the gold coins he was offering. Gold coins were hard to come by in Parallel World for a majority of newbie players. In fact, Gu Fei could already be considered as a wealthy player in-game after yesterday's mission payout.

They two Warriors took the coins and grabbed Sword Demon. Sword Demon was so drunk he could barely remain upright, let

alone resist being dragged out of the bar by the two. It was not long before the two came back and excitedly asked, “Do you still have someone you want to throw out, bro?”

“Nope, that’s it. Thanks a lot!” Gu Fei said to the two Warriors.

“Is this fine?” Brother Assist asked in a hesitant voice.

“Don’t worry about it. It’s all good,” Gu Fei waved his hand nonchalantly. At this moment, Young Master Han’s singing voice could be heard from the room. Gu Fei had the urge to call the two Warriors back again.

“He looks like a cultured man of refined taste, and often waxing poetically. Why is he...” Gu Fei muttered.

“It seems like you don’t know,” Brother Assist laughed, “Young Master Han is a new name he came up with for Parallel World. His previous alias was Drinking Addict.”

“Wouldn’t that make Sword Demon Smoking Addict?” Gu Fei said.

“That’s actually his name in other games before switching to Magic Domain,” Brother Assist confided seriously.

“No way!” Gu Fei was utterly taken aback, “So why the change of name?”

“Well... Heard it’s because Smoking Addict and Drinking Addict were being used as BL material by fujoshis. Sword Demon would rather die than to call himself Smoking Addict again by the time he switched to playing Magic Domain. Master Han followed suit now that they are playing Parallel World together,” Brother Assist explained.

“Oh...” Gu Fei drawled and then asked, “What’s a fujoshi?”

“Uhhh... It’s a very strange creature,” Brother Assist said.

Gu Fei decided not to dig further since it sounded rather complex. He waved at Ray, “Ray, get me two glasses of your most

expensive liquor.”

“Isn’t that a little too much?” Brother Assist felt stunned. As a self-proclaimed information expert, he knew very well how much the drink would cost.

“Don’t worry about it,” Gu Fei said flippantly as his order was brought to them. Gu Fei inhaled sharply when he asked the price, “That’s really expensive! Put it on Young Master Han’s tab!”

“Ah?” Ray was taken aback.

“Isn’t he still here? Just let him pay for our order,” Gu Fei said.

“Oh!” Ray did not say anything further. He was not afraid of not being paid. Not paying for something was considered as fraud and was something penalized by the system. The immersion of the business was well-protected by the system and the safeguards in place were foolproof. No matter how strong the players were, they were nothing more than paper tigers before the system.

“You’re actually shameless!” Brother Assist said to Gu Fei, “I didn’t peg you as such a person!”

“Just drink! This is a rare opportunity,” Gu Fei lifted his glass.

Brother Assist drank a gulp and was pleasantly surprised, “This is something else. It’s well worth the coin.”

“Mmmhmm. Especially when it’s not your money,” Gu Fei lifted his glass and finished it in one go, “Ray, get me another one.”

Brother Assist was speechless.

“Oh, yeah. You said you want to ask me something,” Brother Assist quickly inquired when he saw Gu Fei accepting the second glass from Ray. He was worried that Gu Fei would become drunk like those two.

“Yup. I do,” Gu Fei placed his glass down, “Is there a type of quest in this game that two separate parties can acquire and be pitted against each other? For example...” Gu Fei was worried that he did

not phrase the question well, so he was about to give an example when he saw Brother Assist bob his head, “Yup. That happens. Actually, it’s one of the selling points of Parallel World. Guild quests usually have plenty of participants, so the chances of acquiring a competitive quest at guild level are pretty high, whereas getting a competitive solo quest is much lower.”

“The content of such usually focuses on snatching or protecting something,” Brother Assist’s information network was truly amazing as it was exactly the situation Amethyst Rebirth found itself in.

“But...” Gu Fei still had some doubts and began to describe the situation Amethyst Rebirth was in to Brother Assist.

When Brother Assist heard everything, he laughed, “That’s their mistake. What they discussed and planned for is a search mission called ‘Find the Treasure Chest’. But the quest they received is most probably the ‘Retrieval of the Stolen Treasure Chest’. While both quests seem similar, the goals are different. No plan is needed for ‘Retrieval of the Stolen Treasure Chest’ since every opponent the quest will set guild up against is not fixed. There’s essentially no definite strategy guide for that.”

“That makes sense!” Gu Fei nodded his head repeatedly. He lifted his neck and finished the glass once more, “Ray, liquor!”

“How’s your alcohol tolerance?” Brother Assist felt apprehensive.

“Don’t worry,” Gu Fei laughed. “I’m still sober with this drink. I’m not like those two.”

Brother Assist nodded and casually asked, “Why are you asking me these questions for? Did you join a guild?”

“Nahhh! Why would I?” Gu Fei hurriedly retorted. He would be a laughingstock if he admitted he was stuck with a bunch of ladies, so he slightly tweaked the details of what happened at Yunjiao

Lakeside. He recounted the entire ordeal to Brother Assist from the perspective of a bored player crawling after the people snatching the treasure chest.

“Yunjiao Lakeside... Hey!” Brother Assist, the information king, was obviously familiar with the location and immediately revealed a knowing smile once he heard that Gu Fei had gone there.

“I was just passing by!” Gu Fei quickly added, “Oh, yeah. I even met Royal God Call and he was doing the mission to protect a treasure chest.” Gu Fei originally did not intend to mention Royal God Call and only added that bit to divert the conversation.

“Oh? He’s in a guild? I’ve never heard of that before,” Brother Assist said.

“His guild must be pretty strong to be able to fend off all the others who were trying to snatch the treasure chest. I heard all the players were expert at using skills like Cyclone, Snipe, and even stealthy Backstab,” Gu Fei said.

“That’s truly pretty strong! Only one guild in Yunduan City would be that strong,” Brother Assist said.

“What guild?”

“Traversing Four Seas.”

“That name’s so old-fashioned!”

Brother Assist laughed, “Guilds with old-fashioned names in online games won’t be weak.”

“Why?”

“Just think! Anyone could come up with such an old-fashioned name. But actually acquiring the name for their guild means that it must have been set up just as the game was released. The sooner they establish their guild, the more time they get to polish their skills. So of course they won’t be too weak,” Brother Assist explained.

“That makes a lot of sense!” Gu Fei really learned a lot today. It was as the saying went: “It is better to hear a wise person speak than to study for ten years.” It seemed he should spend more time with Brother Assist so as to improve his own gaming knowledge. After all, online game was not real life. Just like when he wanted to stop the players by the lakeside back then, but was completely ignored and even knocked over by their rush instead. The less such lapses of judgment occurred, the better.

“Got it!” Gu Fei finished his third glass and stood up, “Alright. Time for me to leave.”

“Later!” Brother Assist watched Gu Fei leave the bar, and then he called out, “Ray!”

“Yes?” Ray came over.

Brother Assist pointed at the glass sitting on the table, “Give me a bottle of that expensive liquor. I’m leaving with it.”

Ray was momentarily stunned before he finally asked, “Shall I put it on Young Master Han’s tab as well?”

“Naturally,” Brother Assist’s smile appeared innocuous, “But don’t tell him it’s me who ordered it.”

Gu Fei headed back to Amethyst Rebirth once he left the bar. Since he now understood the whole situation, he decided to report everything to the ladies so as to let them see the whole picture as well and stop their endless grumbling.

Any guild member had permission to open the headquarters’ door. The ladies inside looked at him once he pushed open the door to enter, albeit their gazes somewhat varied.

After hearing what had happened over at Yunjiao Lakeside, they understood that Gu Fei’s involvement let them acquire a treasure chest. However, there was one major issue: Gu Fei personally knew the sniping Archer.

Everyone’s impression of Gu Fei boiled down to three points:

high level, lousy equipment, and randomly added stats.

The last two points alone were indicative of his idiocy, which was more than enough for them to ostracize him. Hearing that such a Mage had defeated a level 30 well-gearred Archer was unbelievable, so finding out that Gu Fei knew the Archer made the ladies suspect that he was a mole. This might mean that those two had acted the part together to help Gu Fei establish an image that would help him gain a foothold within the all-female guild.

Lie Lie came up with this speculation and she even posited an example: How could a lousy Mage get to such a high level? Except for leeching off the experience points of a skilled partner, what other way was there?

Xiaoyu was the one who told the story as well. Given how unreliable Xiaoyu was... It needed no further elaboration. Even if there was a very obvious problem that cropped up back then, she would not have noticed it.

Miles appeared even more suspicious because he had picked to partner up with Xiaoyu. Could it be intentional?

No matter what the case was, they decided to put him under detailed scrutiny. As all these ladies picked apart every detail with every word they uttered, they managed to twist the fact that Gu Fei got the treasure chest and saved Xiaoyu into a situation where Gu Fei was a lecherous wolf who orchestrated a deep, vast, and intricately planned conspiracy.

In the end, all the women split into three factions. Lie Lie, who insisted that Gu Fei was a wolf in sheep's clothing, had the most supporters. July, Luo Luo, and a few others belonged to the second faction that felt the ridiculous story woven by the ladies was impossible. Xiaoyu was the only one who belonged to the group that understood nothing at all.

When Gu Fei entered the house, all three faction members stared straight at him. They all smelled the scent of alcohol once he got

about two steps near them. The ladies in the first faction who already had a poor impression of Gu Fei immediately dropped him down hundreds of points.

Even the ladies in the second faction could not help but wrinkle their brows. Having suffered such a disastrous setback in their first guild mission, Gu Fei actually left to drink while they wallowed in their disappointment. It was far too insensitive to say the least.

Only Xiaoyu remained oblivious to everything, “What’s that smell? Ah, what sort of smell is that?”

Chapter 38 - Finding a Mercenary Group

Gu Fei could see disgust written all over the women's faces when he suddenly reappeared at the guild house. However, he did not put much thought into it since they had always looked at him that way. Gu Fei stepped forward and opened his mouth to tell them of what he had learned but he burped instead.

The alcohol's smell became more evident as it permeated the air further. The ladies recoiled as if they had come into contact with the plague.

"Sorry!" Gu Fei covered his mouth as he smiled sheepishly.

"Alright, dismiss!" July clapped her hands to draw everyone's attention.

"Ah..." Gu Fei originally wanted to stop them to talk, but seeing how everyone rushed to leave, he could only sigh deeply, "Haaaaa...."

"Something the matter?" Luo Luo stopped when she noticed Gu Fei's expression. There were only three people left inside the guild house now; July was always the last to leave, while Xiaoyu... was still trying to pry open the treasure chest!

"The guild quest that we got this time seems to be a competitive quest..." Gu Fei explained the situation based on what he had learned from Brother Assist.

The two listened intently before July nodded her head, "I know. I wasn't mistaken. Our guild quest states that the mission only involves retrieving a stolen treasure chest."

Gu Fei felt stunned.

"Someone set us up to make our quest fail," July said.

"Oh, do you know who is behind it?" Gu Fei asked. If you don't, let me tell you who it is, Gu Fei had prepared this follow-up line.

Sadly, July once again nodded, “Traversing Four Seas.”

“Oh... So you already know!” Gu Fei was a little disappointed. He had spent half the day searching for clues like a blind man, yet these women over here had already known who it was.

“I’m afraid this is just the beginning. Do be careful when you’re outside next time, Miles,” July said as she inspected Gu Fei’s appearance. “Oh, you’re not wearing our guild emblem? I suppose you’ll be fine, then. They won’t ever suspect that we have a male in our guild,” July showed a forced smile when she said this.

“Just what’s going on?” Gu Fei was puzzled.

“Traversing Four Seas... A member of that guild has some bad blood with us. This sabotage carried out on our guild quest is probably his revenge, so everyone should be extra careful out there,” July said.

“Okay, got it,” Gu Fei looked at Xiaoyu. The girl was still fiddling with the treasure chest! It seemed like she would not give up until she finally destroyed the thing.

“I’ll be going, then,” Gu Fei said his farewell to the three and left the guild house.

Watching Gu Fei leave, Luo Luo looked July in the eyes, “You’re not going to tell him about ‘that’?”

“No. There’s no need for him to know. He’s a new member we intend to replace anyway, so there’s no need to involve him,” July said.

Luo Luo spoke in trepidation, “How coincidental it is for ‘him’ to spawn in Yunduan City like us.”

July had grown pensive for quite some time when she suddenly asked, “Luo Luo, do you know of any noteworthy mercenary group?”

“Are we looking for external aid?” Luo Luo felt somewhat

shocked.

July sighed, “We are in no condition to take him on right now.”

“Don’t forget your original reason for creating this guild, which is just to enjoy the game together with some girls,” Luo Luo reminded.

“And look what happened,” July laughed bitterly, “This is an unforeseen development. There’re many cities to spawn in this game, yet ‘he’ just had to spawn in the same one as us. Looks like this game won’t be simple any longer. With all these ladies following me, I need to come up with a way to get us through this hurdle.”

Luo Luo had nothing to add, “Mercenary group you say... I don’t think there’s one at present that could go up against such a large guild.”

“If one isn’t enough, then we’ll just have to hire more,” July said.

“I know you can afford to hire many,” Luo Luo wore a forced smile, “But the problem is—”

“I know of a superb mercenary group!” Xiaoyu suddenly blurted out. July and Luo Luo almost had a heart attack from Xiaoyu’s interjection. The two were absorbed in their conversation that they had forgotten about this other girl in the room.

“Xiaoyu, do you really know of a group?” July smiled. What could this airhead possibly know?

“I learned about the group when I was doing a solo quest. Someone completed the ‘Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto’ quest by hiring a mercenary group,” Xiaoyu told the two eagerly.

July and Luo Luo looked at each other. ‘Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto’ was considered as the hardest among the available quests, and completing it was deemed impossible. Just entering Oolong Cave alone would require players to confront

monsters above their own levels. Hence, any players that could survive for five minutes inside it would be considered as pretty good. There were even rumors that someone had gathered a large group of players to attempt the quest and managed to make their way up to the boss, but they were all wiped out and sent back to the spawn point in the end. Ever since then, no one else dared to take a crack at it.

“Someone managed to complete that quest? When was this?” Luo Luo asked. The completion of such a difficult quest should have been big news, yet she heard not even a peep about it.

“I think it was last night,” Xiaoyu answered.

“Oh...” Luo Luo finally understood. This news had yet to spread since it had only been completed hours ago.

“What’s the mercenary group’s name?” July began to feel that they had a fighting chance. Given the strength of this mercenary group, they only had to make sure that it was not affiliated to Traversing Four Seas.

“I forgot,” Xiaoyu said.

“How many members does this group have? Who’s its leader?” July continued to ask Xiaoyu.

She began to think hard, yet to no avail.

“Forget it!” Luo Luo smiled, “Let’s not ask Xiaoyu. I’ll just go check it out myself!”

“Go ahead!” July had a solemn expression. This mercenary group was possibly their best bet right now.

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Gu Fei was currently strolling around Yunduan City as he pondered on a question. July mentioned that somebody from Traversing Four Seas had an enmity with her. It was so bad that it had caused that person to expend so much effort into messing up

this one simple guild quest. July did not look like she wanted to speak more on this, so Gu Fei chose not to pursue the matter either.

Parallel World had not been up for a long a time. At least, it was not long enough for someone to develop such a deep grudge toward Amethyst Rebirth. It was apparent that this dispute had occurred in an online game in the past; could it be something that had happened in real life instead? Gu Fei thought of finding Brother Assist and getting him to investigate this matter more, but he felt it somewhat awkward to ask for another favor so soon. He resisted that initial urge and instead thought of how the ladies had done their own sleuthing. Gu Fei decided to find out about the matter on his own, so he logged off immediately.

Gu Fei felt like a novice as he tried to search for information on the internet. He keyed in 'July' and was overloaded with all sorts of information one could imagine. Afterward, he unwittingly keyed in Luo Luo's [IGN](#) 'Ruthless Falling Flowers' and found an entry about a certain online history that was written like a short novel.

In this short story, Ruthless Falling Flowers was just a side character who got mixed up in the mess of the two main characters: July's Heat and No Smile.

'No Smile actually enjoyed smiling.'

Gu Fei felt somewhat startled by such an opening sentence to the story. He could not help but praise the talent of today's writers.

Since he was not here to appreciate the story, Gu Fei quickly skimmed through it to get to his real purpose.

It had the elements of love and hate, lies and truth, cheating and being cheated like any classical stories. The July's Heat in the story was a very passionate and generous woman who ended up getting cheated by No Smile until she had nothing left. Gu Fei wondered if this person was really the steadfast guild leader that he knew.

The story did not end there, though. After July had left the game, another character came. This new person used an even more wicked method to cheat No Smile out of everything. The rumors said that this person was July's Heat, adopting a professional attitude to exact revenge.

No Smile, who was filled with hate, chose to leave the game as well. Since it was an online game, the story had come to an end at that point.

And yet, the characters had all gathered here in Parallel World, as if looking for a chance to continue their intricate story. Gu Fei assumed that the person whom July said she had an antagonistic relationship was this player No Smile.

=====

At this moment in the game, Luo Luo left the guild house and went to the tavern where people acquired solo quests. Many kinds of quests existed in Parallel World. Aside from the quests that could be acquired from taverns, there were also those that could be obtained serendipitously from the streets and plot-based quests that involved NPCs. These NPC-related quests would not appear again after their completion, and the quest rewards players could earn from completing them were far more enticing than the normal quests.

The solo quests that players referred to were those listed by the system taverns. The list would refresh every hour for the players to choose anew. Although these quests were limited to a first-come, first-served basis, they were all repeatable. The solo quests were the staple method in which people could earn experience points through questing. The so-called most difficult solo quest to date, 'Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto', came from this tavern as well.

Because of this, Luo Luo had an easier time looking for information about her subject compared to Gu Fei. All she had to

do was casually asked a few players. However, everyone reacted with shock, just like Luo Luo once did, when they heard that a mercenary group had managed to complete the 'Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto' quest.

It seemed like this matter had not gotten to the grapevine yet. Luo Luo thought up to this and left the tavern to make her way to the Hall of Mercenaries.

The Hall of Mercenaries had two large chambers: East Hall and West Hall. The East Hall was the place for system-released missions and where a majority of mercenary groups would go to complete missions. The West Hall was for players support. It was the place that embodied a mercenary group's essence – clearing monsters and solving problems for players for an agreed-upon price – and where professional mercenaries would go to obtain their missions from.

There was a logbook in each of the two halls, which allowed players to check the strength of a mercenary group. Luo Luo arrived in front of the West Hall's logbook and patiently flipped through it.

Finally, under the Completed Mission section, Luo Luo found the record about the 'Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto' quest.

The Mage that took the quest did not have the ability to complete it on his own, so he hired people from the Hall of Mercenaries for a high price. That was yesterday.

The mercenary group that took the mission was... Luo Luo tapped her index finger as she traced the log to get the relevant information she needed.

Young Master's Elite...

Mercenary Group Leader: Young Master Han...

IGN - is short for 'In Game Name'.

Chapter 39 - Pleasure working with you

“Young Master Han....”

Luo Luo muttered the name under her breath. Online gaming experts would not easily change their name no matter what games they played. The habit of retaining their IGN for various games was no longer limited to professional gamers, as even the average players did it as well.

Having a famous IGN had great appeal. The value of this intangible asset was enormous in online games, especially when it came to forming guilds, mercenary groups, or similar group activities.

Luo Luo had wondered if the mercenary group was formed by an illustrious gamer after hearing from Xiaoyu about how they completed the 'Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto' quest. It was not the first time she had come across the name “Young Master Han” despite it not being associated with a famed expert. She was certain that she had seen a similar name in the top few ranks of the official total experience earned leaderboard for the Priest job class. Luo Luo had naturally monitored the rankings since she was a Priest.

Luo Luo noticed a row of words while she was reading the record in the logbook. In the notes column for the mission, the employer had a final remark regarding the mercenary group and it was just this one sentence: “It has the strongest Mage.”

Strongest Mage...

The Mage ranked first in terms of level on the current ranking leaderboard was a player called Drifting. But since a massive amount of experience points was needed to level up once players reached level 30, it was not realistic to be the best by merely getting to a higher level in Parallel World. Equipment and skill proficiencies were what mattered more in deciding the ability of

each player. Thus, 'the strongest Mage' might not be referring to the current highest level Mage Drifting.

Speculating any further was pointless. Luo Luo decided to simply contact the mercenary group and consider things later. She opened her friends list and keyed in 'Young Master Han' to look him up. Seeing that he was online, Luo Luo quickly added him as a friend.

“Hello...” Luo Luo messaged him.

Young Master Han replied in about half a minute, “Hello.”

“Young Master’s Elite?” Luo Luo asked.

“That’s right.”

“I have a request for your mercenary group. Can we talk in person?” Luo Luo asked.

“Ray’s Bar!”

“Got it. I’ll be there right away,” Luo Luo closed the message window, feeling reassured. Young Master Han’s messaging style had the air of a clean-cut professional, which left a good impression on her. The way she saw it, someone who spoke so straightforwardly would definitely accomplish matters with efficiency.

Ray’s Bar was famous. Although Luo Luo had not been there before, she knew where it was located.

After passing a few streets, she arrived at the back entrance of Ray’s Bar. The side alley was hardly used by anyone, yet a person currently lay sprawled there.

She quickly stepped forward and the heavy smell of alcohol filled her nostrils. The player was actually snoring as he slept.

It seemed like the man had drunk quite a lot. Luo Luo furrowed her brows and did not bother about him anymore. She made her way around the prone body and entered the bar.

Ray welcomed her warmly as she entered, “May I take your

order, Miss?”

“Uh, I’m actually looking for someone,” Luo Luo said.

“Who might that be?” Ray was still speaking to her warmly.

“Young Master Han,” Luo Luo answered as she stared at the legendary Ray. Was it possible that he actually knew every single customer in the bar?

Ray continued smiling as he pointed toward one of the rooms, “He’ll be over there.”

“Oh, thank you...” Luo Luo was a little surprised as she thanked him and headed toward the indicated room.

As she lifted the curtain aside, Luo Luo saw a man seated within. Anyone who saw the angelic features of Young Master Han would be amazed. Luo Luo could not help but freeze on the spot for a bit before finally asking, “Young Master Han?”

“Ruthless Falling Flowers?” Young Master Han answered with a question.

Luo Luo nodded her head.

“Have a seat!” Young Master Han gestured as he shouted out the room, “Ray!”

Ray answered almost immediately, “Do you have an order?”

“Clear the table please. I have some business to discuss,” Young Master Han smiled.

Ray dexterously picked up the empty glasses on the table. Luo Luo found that this surreal bar did live up to its name; it actually had such a thorough and realistic service like a bar in reality! Was the person presently cleaning the table in front of her really the renowned wealthiest player of Parallel World?

“Bring me a glass of water, if you will,” Young Master Han spoke to Ray as he turned to ask Luo Luo, “Do you have anything in mind?”

“Get me a glass of water as well,” Luo Luo said. A bar that actually served water! This was one thing that the system-generated taverns did not have. Luo Luo was interested in finding out just what sort of water this bar would serve.

The glasses were quickly brought over. Young Master Han took one and drank a big gulp as Luo Luo sipped the other politely, trying to taste the difference.

“It’s just water. There’s nothing special about it,” Young Master Han smiled.

Luo Luo felt slightly embarrassed as she placed the glass down.

“Tell me about your request.”

“How many people does your mercenary group have?” Luo Luo wanted to get a better grasp of the situation first.

“There’re six of us,” Young Master Han replied.

“That’s all?!” Luo Luo was taken aback by that answer.

“We’re an elite team. We focus on quality, not quantity,” Young Master Han smiled once more.

“Did you finish the quest ‘Seizing the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto’ with just the six of you?” Luo Luo asked once more.

“Yup, we did...” Young Master Han’s enunciation of the word “we” softened, and it seemed to lack confidence.

However, such a small detail was not noticed by Luo Luo, who simply nodded her head, “Can you introduce me to the other members?”

Young Master Han did not give her a definite answer as he leaned back and said, “Why don’t you tell me about your request first. If we’re not interested in it, there won’t be a need for any introductions.”

“Oh? Then what sort of mission interests you?” Luo Luo said.

“Something that sounds impossible,” Young Master Han stated.

“In that case, you’ll definitely be satisfied with my request,” Luo Luo said.

“Let’s hear it.”

“Help us deal with Traversing Four Seas,” Luo Luo said this sentence slowly. In truth, the hope she originally had for this mercenary group had dimmed quite a bit. She could hardly believe that this mercenary group had only six members. Even if the six were talented individuals, they were still in the game’s early stages. The gap in terms of strength and skill could not be too far off no matter how powerful these pros were. The ladies of Amethyst Rebirth were insta-killed by the guild members of Traversing Four Seas. That the Traversing Four Seas’ members were able to do so was a clear indication of just how powerful they were. Even the current strongest players would not be much better when compared to them, right?

However, Young Master Han did not even raise his brow upon hearing the name Traversing Four Seas and instead asked Luo Luo, “Isn’t that the guild considered as the strongest in Yunduan City at the moment?”

Luo Luo nodded.

“They won’t be having that title soon,” Young Master Han flashed her a dazzling smile.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Because you just hired my mercenary group to deal with them,” Young Master Han explained very matter-of-factly.

Luo Luo’s eyes widened. This person in front of her was very....

“Right now, I only need to know one thing,” Young Master Han said.

Luo Luo was somewhat puzzled. She felt that there were still

many things to discuss with regard to the matter. Surely, Young Master Han planned to introduce her to all the team members and give her a general understanding of their group, right? Or even settle the issue of payment at the very least?

However, the only question that passed Young Master Han's lips was, "How do you want us to deal with that guild?"

At this point, Luo Luo was utterly flabbergasted. She originally intended to hire just a single mercenary group at first. And if she found that one group was not enough, she would proceed to hire a few more groups. Only then would she and the other ladies in the guild discuss about carrying out their plan. She believed that was what July had in mind as well. But this person spoke as if his six-person mercenary team could handle the matter alone! Could that even be done?

Seeing that Luo Luo was momentarily speechless, Young Master Han suddenly laughed, "Alright. I know what we have to do."

"You do?" Luo Luo was surprised.

"Ruthless Falling Flowers... Ahem, your guild's goal is definitely to deal with No Smile," Young Master Han chuckled as he said this.

This Young Master Han is definitely not just a regular gamer, Luo Luo came to this conclusion as only an experienced online gamer would know about the feud between July and No Smile.

"However, I'm afraid just dealing with No Smile won't be enough. How about we revert back the entire core members of Traversing Four Seas to zero?" Young Master Han asked.

Luo Luo was dumbfounded.

"That's settled then!" Young Master Han stood up and prepared to leave.

"Wait!" Luo Luo roused.

"What's the matter? Is it not enough?" Young Master Han asked.

“No, I just wanted to ask about your fee...” Luo Luo said.

“That... Let’s discuss that after we finish the mission at hand. I’m not worried you won’t pay us,” Young Master Han smiled.

Luo Luo was moved. Talking about payment only after the mission was completed was another way of saying, If we can’t accomplish the task, we won’t talk about payment. Was this person actually serious this whole time and not merely bragging about the mercenary group’s capabilities? Or would he end up backing out from the mission after a few days?

“I’ll contact you later,” Young Master Han exited the room with that final words.

He did not seem to be faking any part of this. His mercenary group’s strength might be the real deal after all. Their completion of the Sooto quest was enough proof to back up this claim! They did not seem to have any relations with Traversing Four Seas, so she had to secure their help on this matter. As she pondered on this while staring at the glass in front of her, the bar’s peaceful atmosphere was abruptly overturned by a ghastly cry that rang across, “WHO ORDERED ALL THESE?!”

Luo Luo immediately got up and parted the curtain. She saw Young Master Han standing by the bar, roaring at Ray as he vigorously shook the bill in his hand. Ray’s expression remained unchanged as he replied to Young Master Han’s question, “It’s the Mage you were with before.”

“THAT GUY!” Young Master Han viciously slammed his palm on the table before him as if it was Gu Fei.

Luo Luo tiptoed next to him and peeked at the bill in his hand. She inhaled sharply.

Listed on the bill was the current most expensive in-game liquor. A person ordered a whole bottle and four glasses of it! The cost amounted to two hundred gold coins. It was an astronomical sum

that even the combined coins of everyone inside the bar at the moment might not be enough to pay fully. That Mage was so strong that nobody right now could afford his bill. Strongest indeed!

“Now... Can we talk about the payment issue?” Luo Luo suddenly smiled as she asked.

Young Master Han turned back and stared at her before he sighed heavily, “Let’s go in and talk about it.”

“Can you introduce me to that Mage?” Luo Luo asked as she made her way back to the room with Young Master Han.

“Don’t mention him in front of me!” Young Master Han’s eyes flashed a murderous glint.

“What’s his name?” Luo Luo pestered.

“You want to know his name? It’s SHAMELESS!” Young Master Han was determined not to speak his name.

“Achoo!” Gu Fei suddenly sneezed while he was looking for more information about July’s Heat and No Smile’s involvement.

“That’s weird. I’ve been sneezing a lot lately,” Gu Fei mumbled to himself as he rubbed his nose.

Chapter 40 - Mercenary group! Roll out!

Luo Luo left Ray's Bar grinning from ear to ear.

Although Young Master Han had not revealed who the other group members were, she at least learned that they were all level 30 experts. As for that 'strongest Mage', Young Master Han only said, "He soloed the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto."

In truth, Gu Fei was only able to solo-kill Sooto through a series of lucky coincidences. But for anyone not privy to the inner workings involved, hearing about Gu Fei's singular achievement made it seem like he was monstrously strong. After talking to Young Master Han, Luo Luo now had absolute faith in the mercenary group's strength, particularly in that mysterious Mage.

Still, a sliver of doubt lingered in Luo Luo's heart. Young Master Han had remained tight-lipped about his fellow group members' names for some unknown reason. Nevertheless, she had managed to acquire their service in exchange for helping Young Master Han clear his bar tab. Although he did not say how much their exact service fee was, he would at least feel indebted to her for footing the bill. Given Young Master Han's extreme narcissism, Luo Luo was certain that he would never be able to live down owing somebody anything, and thus would not renege on their deal.

However, the mission she gave them was not to kill any particular Traversing Four Seas guild member back to level 0, as she knew that doing so would not resolve the problem. Instead, she requested the mercenary group to convince Traversing Four Seas to not make things difficult for Amethyst Rebirth again.

Young Master Han still agreed to such a vague request; his parting words to her were, "Don't worry. I'll ensure that No Smile won't be smiling for real."

He did not reveal how they would accomplish the mission, though. He just told Luo Luo to relax and watch the show as it

unfolded.

I hope he can make good on his promise, Luo Luo thought.

=====

Young Master Han immediately rallied his troops once he had sent Luo Luo away. He was prepared to settle the score about the bill with Gu Fei as well, yet he became vexed instead when he saw on his friends list that Gu Fei was offline.

The others quickly arrived at Ray's Bar. War Without Wounds carried Sword Demon back inside from the side alley.

"Why's this guy sleeping out there?" War Without Wounds asked.

No one knew the reason except for Brother Assist, who was trying to hold back his laughter. Sword Demon was clearly still drunk as he managed to resume sleeping in one corner after being carried back inside.

"Let's hear about this mission first," Royal God Call said.

Young Master Han briefed everyone about the matter at hand. July's Heat and No Smile's drama was public knowledge in the online gaming community. Since all were veteran online gamers aside from the absent Gu Fei, they were able to speed things up.

"Although killing No Smile is easy, ensuring that he won't bother Amethyst Rebirth afterward is not. We need to plan this long term. Brother Assist, please gather intel about No Smile from Traversing Four Seas," Young Master Han dictated.

Brother Assist nodded as he turned to look at Royal God Call, "Royal, you're Traversing Four Seas' member, right?"

"How did you know?!" Royal God Call was stunned.

Everyone shifted their gazes on to him. Their present task was to takedown Traversing Four Seas, yet one of them actually belonged to that guild!

“Don’t look at me like that! I only joined that guild for fun,” Royal God Call hastily explained.

“Royal, today, over by Yunjiao Lakeside—”

“Alright, Brother Assist! I give up,” Royal God Call was dumbfounded, “You really are an information expert. How did you find out?”

Brother Assist’s smile was as calm as ever.

“What’s the matter?” Young Master Han asked.

“Just this afternoon, Traversing Four Seas put together a party to interfere with Amethyst Rebirth’s guild quest over by Yunjiao Lakeside. I was a part of that party. I even met Miles there.”

“Miles?”

“He was with a girl who is most likely from Amethyst Rebirth,” Royal God Call said.

“And then?”

“Let’s not talk about it. I heard that Amethyst Rebirth is an all-female guild, yet the ones I saw attempting to snatch the treasure chest were all men except for that girl. Since I was shooting from afar, I did not monitor my immediate surroundings. Someone crept behind me and kicked me down the hillside, causing me to faint. When I came around, I saw Miles. He seems to know the girl so I gave her the chest,” Royal God Call explained.

“Who hit you at the time?”

“I don’t know. I asked Miles but he didn’t see anything either,” Royal God Call said.

“Weird. That person had gotten behind you, killing you would have been super easy. Why did he leave you alive?” everyone wondered.

“Luck! It’s luck!” Royal God Call felt thankful inside that that person had only kicked him downhill and not killed him outright.

Players incurred severe penalty for dying in Parallel World. Not only would they drop a whole level, they could also possibly lose an item from their inventory. This design was created with the players who would join the game at a later stage in mind. At present, the only operational server of Parallel World was this one, so the officials placed a cap on the number of players that could play the game. But once the number of gaming server increased, the game company would definitely pull in more players. Evidently, the new players would be weaker compared to the old players; the game company was worried that that might lead to the new players' losing interest into continuously playing Parallel World. Hence, the developers had increased the amount of experience points needed to level up and came up with the severe penalties for dying. This way, the newbies would be able compete with the veteran players.

“From what I heard, all the Amethyst Rebirth's members were insta-killed. How come the one you met actually succeeded? Your party must have been really mad at you!” Brother Assist guffawed.

Royal God Call immediately lifted his nose high, “Those people don't know jack sh*t about how things were on my end! That girl wouldn't have managed to escape if I had not held back for Miles' sake. F*ck, they even dared to call me an unskilled Archer! C*nts, I'll quit that guild right now.”

“Wait. Don't leave that guild yet,” Young Master Han stopped him.

“Why?” Royal God Call asked.

“Stay in Traversing Four Seas. It might come in handy,” Young Master Han suggested.

“Act as a spy!” Royal God Call easily understood his intention.

“Okay, that's all for now!” Young Master Han declared, “This mission is unlike those garbage system-generated quests, so we must be careful and prepare thoroughly. If anyone sees Miles

online, immediately inform him as well.”

“And him?” Brother Assist pointed to the snoring Sword Demon in the corner.

“Wounds, where did you grab him from?” Young Master Han asked.

“The side alley behind the bar,” War Without Wounds answered.

“For god’s sake, why didn’t any passerby kill him? This guy’s useless; how can he be my partner when his alcohol tolerance is so low. Get up Sword Demon. GET UP!” Young Master Han laid two well-placed fists straight toward Sword Demon’s noggin.

“I’ll leave you guys to it... We’re going to take our leave.” The three could no longer bear to look on and left the premise.

Gu Fei did not get online again yesterday, so it was only at this moment today that he received Young Master Han’s urgent message. Gu Fei thought that his little ploy of shoving his drinking bill to Young Master Han must have been found out by him already, so he took his money pouch and made his way over to Ray’s Bar. He was only trolling Young Master Han and had no intention of making him pay the total bill.

When he lifted the curtain to their usual room, he saw all his teammates seated and glaring at him. Young Master Han’s eyes even had a hint of murderous intent. Gu Fei felt a chill in his heart as he wondered, What’s all this about? It’s just a harmless prank. Are they planning to beat me up for that?! He touched his small money pouch as he cheekily said, “Everyone’s here!”

“We’ve waited for you for hours!” Young Master Han hollered, “Can’t you spend less time out in the sun and more time doing meaningful stuff online?”

Gu Fei was speechless. What logic was this?

“Fine, that’s enough. Let’s not waste anymore time. Get seated and hear Brother Assist’s briefing for our current situation,”

Young Master Han seethed.

Gu Fei felt like commending Young Master Han for not bringing up yesterday's bill issue. He sat down and nudged Brother Assist, "What is it about?"

"Our new mission," Royal God Call replied instead.

"Oh..." Gu Fei responded.

Brother Assist cleared his throat to begin, "No Smile is—"

"Eh?!" Gu Fei cried out, "No Smile?!"

Everyone stared at him.

"I know that guy," Gu Fei hurriedly clarified.

"What are you shouting for? We all know him too," Young Master Han said, "You want others to find out we are plotting his death?!"

Gu Fei quickly whispered, "We're killing him?"

"Shut up! Listen to what Brother Assist has to say," Young Master Han was clearly still pissed at Gu Fei for his yesterday's stunt even if he had not brought it up.

Brother Assist cleared his throat once more, "The name 'No Smile' is quite famous in the online gaming community. I'm not going to talk about his past, since I'm sure we've all heard of it before. This time, his job class in Parallel World is Thief. He's at level 30 and is ranked eleventh on the experience earned efficiency leaderboard for the Thief job class. He is also one of the four core members of Traversing Four Seas. His stat point distribution seems to lean toward Strength, but we're not sure about his equipment. Movement wise, he's spotted grinding at Yunxia Valley, in the western side of Yunduan City. He usually tags along with his fellow guild members and is never seen alone."

Brother Assist paused for breath before he continued, "Yunxia Valley's monsters are at level 40. Sword Demon, you're also

usually grinding there, right? The monsters over there have high Attack but low Defense. It's more suitable for players with job classes that have high dodge rating as well as high Attack, like Thief."

Sword Demon nodded and added, "Miles grinds there as well."

Brother Assist was momentarily stunned and unwittingly commented, "It's better for Mages to grind higher level monsters over by Yunwu Basin! The monsters there move much slower and have lower magic defense. Most Mages are found grinding there."

"Oh, I'll check it out next time," Gu Fei said.

Everyone stared at Gu Fei blankly. Brother Assist calmed himself down before continuing, "That's what we know so far. If we want to get more details, it will require more time."

"It's enough. Let's show them what we got with a little shock and awe," Young Master Han said this as he retrieved some cloth from his pocket and threw the stack on the table, "Take one each."

"What're these for?" Gu Fei picked one up and noticed that it had a triangular shape.

"For covering our faces," Young Master Han said.

"What for?!" Gu Fei was startled.

"This mission is different from the one we did last time. What we're going up against isn't a dumb AI but other players just like us. The Appraisal skill can view our level, job class, and equipment, but not our names. Covering our faces will circumvent this problem of being identified," Young Master Han said.

"There's no need for this!" Everyone was clearly against the idea.

Young Master Han's nostrils flared as he said coldly, "I did not tell the employer your names. If you think this is an unnecessary precaution and refuse to wear the cloth, I won't force you to do it. But I'll warn you; if one of our faces isn't covered, we might

indirectly trouble our fellow squad mates. I'll be wearing mine. You guys do yours."

Silence ensued. After a while, Sword Demon took a piece from the pile in front of them and stuffed it into his pocket.

War Without Wounds, Brother Assist, and Royal God Call proceeded to take a piece. Gu Fei hesitated for a bit before finally taking one piece himself, so as to avoid inconveniencing the others.

"Why are there two pieces left?" After taking a piece, Gu Fei realized that there were still two strips left on the table.

Young Master Han kept the last two as he said lightly, "Just these two strips may not be enough to mask my peerless beauty entirely."

"F*ck off!" everyone exclaimed in unison.

"Okay, set your conversation window to the private mercenary group channel. Once we're all ready, make your own way toward Yunxia Valley."

The six members of Young Master's Elite group set off once again.

Chapter 41 - Preparations before the Battle

The six left the bar and went about their ways. Sword Demon and War Without Wounds had to get their equipment repaired, Royal God Call had to replenish his quiver of arrows, Brother Assist went straight toward Yunxia Valley, and Young Master Han expressed, “I should find another piece of cloth. These two I have really aren’t enough to hide my beauty.”

As for Gu Fei, he headed to the Auction House. He still had dozens of gold coins on himself, so he decided to purchase a more useful weapon.

The common-grade sword he originally had suited him perfectly, although it was an unremarkable piece of weaponry in the eyes of many. It was so mediocre that no one would consider selling it in the Auction House. Gu Fei spent quite some time searching for something similar, yet he still left empty-handed.

Gu Fei had specific criteria that were distinct from other players when it came to his weapon. He was very particular about the weapon’s length, weight, and specifications. Gu Fei felt that these requirements were far more important than the stated Physical Attack of the weapon as they would greatly affect his ability to display his combat prowess fully. The in-game search engine lacked the advanced parameters to sort through those aspects, so Gu Fei could only inspect each item individually in the Exhibition Hall.

This made Gu Fei’s search more intensive and time-consuming. By the time the others from the mercenary team indicated their arrival at Yunxia Valley in the private group channel, Gu Fei had just found a suitable Chinese broadsword.

Flames of Baptism. It had a much higher Physical Attack than Gu Fei’s previous common-grade sword, and it even had a 30% chance of inflicting an additional fire attack to opponents.

Other players would consider such a weapon as barely acceptable. In Parallel World, additional Spell Damage from equipment was affected by the character's own stat distribution. This meant that characters with higher magic affinity could naturally inflict stronger Spell Damage by using magic weapons. Hence, job classes, such as Warriors, that had poor magic affinity preferred weapons that could cause status effect in lieu of Spell Damage. Examples of these status effects were the Slow effect that Ice Damage could cause, Paralysis from Electric Damage, and so on. Weapons like Flames of Baptism, which could inflict additional Fire Damage without causing status effect, were considered only tolerable.

This was why everyone ignored this weapon, which cost about 60 gold coins, even though it had an additional magic attack [proc rate](#) of 30%. Compared to Flames of Baptism, many players would probably prefer something like Sword Demon's Frost Memories, which boosted 10% chance of causing a freezing effect.

Gu Fei did not know about all this basic gaming knowledge, though. He simply saw that Flames of Baptism had a high enough Physical attack and an additional high fire attack proc rate that could supplement his low damage, so he went ahead and bought it without hesitation.

"Miles, what's your status?" Now that the others had reached the valley and Gu Fei had yet to reply, Young Master Han chose to single him out and specifically asked him.

"Mmm. I'll be there soon..." Gu Fei took the Flames of Baptism from the display case. The blade was dark red and had a slight scorching sensation when held – as expected of a fire-based weapon. Gu Fei only regretted that the sword had no scabbard, so he had to stuff it into his dimensional pocket. He quickly made his way to the destination after everything was done.

Gu Fei was bombarded by Young Master Han's criticisms and urgings all the way to Yunxia Valley's baked soil. Having spent countless days in this region before, Gu Fei felt somewhat

emotional now that he was back. He directed his question toward the mercenary group's conversation window, "I'm here. Where are you guys?"

"Use the large stone by the lake as your axis of reference. The dilapidated wooden house should be at your twelve o'clock. I'm now at the one o'clock direction, Sword Demon's at four, Royal's at six, Wounds' at nine, and Brother Assist has arrived at ten. You... Just hide somewhere and cover your face," Young Master Han instructed.

Gu Fei took out his cloth strip and tied it to his face. Gu Fei was quite familiar with this area as it was the level-40 map he had been grinding. Most players were currently at level 30, but not many of them could grind monsters 10 levels higher than themselves. Seeing that no one was around him, Gu Fei chose to conceal himself within the nearby forest.

"Don't attack arbitrarily. Let's wait for our targets to appear, use Appraisal on them to confirm our battle strategy, and then deal with them all at once," Young Master Han said.

Everyone agreed.

The valley was silent as everyone patiently waited. Gu Fei had to stop himself from rushing into the monsters nearby to try out his newly bought Chinese broadsword.

The wait lasted for half an hour, and then some started to become restless. Each began to inquire on the conversation window, "Brother Assist, are you sure your intel is correct? Are you certain he trains here?"

"Very sure!" Brother Assist trusted fully his information network.

Everyone endured for another ten minutes due to how confident he had sounded, yet there was still no one in sight. Even Brother Assist himself began to waiver a little and became somewhat

restless.

“Why don’t we grind here a little?” Gu Fei was keen to try out his new weapon.

“I see someone! Someone’s coming!” Sword Demon sent out a message. Everyone’s eyes darted toward the valley entrance and spotted a group of people swaggering in.

“Oh, there’re quite a few people!” Royal God Call felt shocked.

“There’re ten of them,” Brother Assist quickly passed on the information, “Based on their equipment, there’re two Warriors, one Mage, one Archer, three Thieves, and three Priests.”

“Is anyone close enough to use Appraisal on them?” Young Master Han asked.

The four answered in negatives, which made Gu Fei’s response stand out, “I haven’t learned Appraisal yet.”

Everyone was dumbfounded at this revelation.

The ten people entered the valley, got into their grinding formation, and began engaging the monsters.

“Is there nobody able to get within range to appraise them?” Young Master Han asked once more.

“I’ll give it a shot,” Sword Demon said.

“That’s what I wanted to hear,” Young Master Han smirked.

Sword Demon activated his Stealth skill and made his way toward the target group from the mountain side. There was no skill that could counter Stealth at the moment, so every Thief had become very good at concealing themselves and lurking about.

However, Stealth would get canceled easily once a player attacked or was attacked. Using Appraisal while on Stealth would cancel out its effect as well. Hence, Sword Demon’s only choice was to move closer to the ten-man group and keep himself hidden while he used Appraisal on each of them.

The position he chose was the huge rock beside the lake that Young Master Han had used as the axis of reference. The others' hearts thumped loudly when they saw his invisibility came off behind that rock. He was barely two meters away from one of the group's members; the person only had to take two huge steps toward the rock and Sword Demon would be discovered. With how Stealth normally worked, players could no longer activate the skill once they entered combat mode. It was easy for an experienced player to prevent a Thief from re-entering Stealth.

More importantly, players had to use their eyes to appraise their target. Sword Demon was presently hiding behind the huge rock, which obstructed his view of the grinding party. He would have to stick his head out of the rock to appraise the targets. Unfortunately, he did not know when would be the appropriate instance to do so, since he could not see what their targets were currently doing. How would Sword Demon know when to peek out and appraise them?

It was in this moment that Gu Fei finally had the chance to witness the legendary partnership of the Dynamic Addiction Duo (D.A.D.) of the online gaming community.

Young Master Han had already positioned himself on a distant elevated plane, acting as Sword Demon's eyes. He noted the ten players' line of sight and gave Sword Demon a signal. Sword Demon's moved perfectly in sync with Young Master Han, as if the latter was the one controlling the former. Sword Demon's head poked out from behind the rock for ten times without anyone noticing, appraising the ten-man group one by one and posting the result of his Appraisal onto the mercenary group's conversation window.

Traversing Four Seas was indeed the best major guild in Yunduan City. Eight of the ten players had already reached level 30. Naturally, Young Master's Elite's members were all at level 30 as well, and the distance between these top experts of their job classes

and those eight players in terms of experience points earned was substantial. However, the experience earned by players had no direct impact to their combat capabilities; this was once again something that Parallel World's officials had cooked up to bridge the gap between new and old players.

“Their levels aren't low, but their equipment is so-so,” Brother Assist already had a good estimate of their abilities after watching the ten players grind and reading the information from Sword Demon's Appraisal report. He shared his analysis, “The two Warriors will be difficult to insta-kill; they seem to have focused on their Endurance stat while leveling up. The Mage's weapon isn't bad; he has a high Magic Attack but terrible defense rating. The Archer is a leecher so he can be ignored. The three Priests are of average skill but will become problematic if they focus their healing on the two Warriors. As for the three Thieves, two are average while the third is No Smile. Sword Demon's Appraisal skill failed on him, which means that his Appraisal proficiency is higher than Sword Demon's.”

“Alright. Sword Demon, get into Stealth first,” Young Master Han ordered.

Sword Demon showed a thumbs-up toward the one o'clock direction and disappeared once more as he activated his Stealth.

“Let's take the three Priests out first. What do you think, Brother Assist?” Young Master Han spoke on the conversation window to discuss their battle plan.

“Agree. Or else, the two Warriors will pose too much danger to us,” Brother Assist said, “But the two Priests among the three have focused their points toward Endurance, so it might be hard to deal with them. Wounds' Cyclone can insta-kill one of them, but Sword Demon's Backstab and Royal's Snipe won't be enough for the other two. If they're quick enough, they'll be able to bestow Heal on one another and prolong the battle, which will only complicate things again.”

“Looks like it’s not possible to kill off all ten of them in one go,” Young Master Han said.

“I don’t think that’s possible,” Brother Assist sighed.

“How about you guys? Any ideas?” Young Master Han asked.

“Since we can’t kill them in one go, then let’s break them instead!” Gu Fei said.

“Oh?” Everyone waited for Gu Fei to continue.

“Their group composition has a huge flaw,” Gu Fei explained.

“What is it?” Everyone began to take note of the group’s composition almost immediately.

“The Mage has low defense and HP, and that Archer is weak,” Gu Fei continued.

“So if we finish that Mage off, their team will lose the ability to deal long range attacks,” Young Master Han had caught on to Gu Fei’s intentions.

“That’s right. With Royal’s Attack Power, he’ll be able to insta-kill that Mage,” Gu Fei still clearly remembered Royal God Call’s Snipe from the day before.

Brother Assist quickly calculated the Mage’s character composition and wholeheartedly agreed with the assessment, “A guaranteed insta-kill! Unless Royal misses, of course.”

“Very funny,” Royal God Call showed his disdain.

“Once they realize they are being sniped by an Archer, I’m guessing they’ll instinctively spread out and find cover,” Gu Fei said, “Using this opportunity, Sword Demon can attack right away from Stealth and finish off one of the Priests.”

“Not necessarily,” Sword Demon corrected Gu Fei, “I could perhaps take care of two.”

“But that’ll reveal Sword Demon,” Royal God Call interjected.

“Just run away, then. Is anyone among them capable of catching up to Sword Demon?” Gu Fei said.

“There’s still an Archer,” Royal God Call said. An arrow from an Archer would most definitely be faster than Sword Demon.

“Your second Snipe is ready by then, right?” Gu Fei said.

“So,” Gu Fei concluded, “Effectively using Sword Demon’s Stealth and Royal’s Snipe should be enough to take care of this group.”

“The idea is sound,” Young Master Han said, “Our goal is to massacre them all. So once Sword Demon and Royal cause enough mayhem, we will all join in the assault.”

“Got it!” everyone answered.

“Royal, get ready,” Young Master Han gave out the attack order.

Proc rate - is a common term used in programming to refer to an event triggered under particular circumstances. In games, it usually means the percentage of chance an effect will be applied upon use. In this case, Flames of Baptism has a 30% chance to deal additional fire attack.

Chapter 42 - All but one died

Royal God Call assumed a shooting position, nocked an arrow, and drew the bow.

After aiming it at the target, he released the arrow with Snipe. The arrow flew across the air and struck the Mage right on his forehead.

“D*mn, son! What’s with the headshot?!”

“Guess I played too much Counter Strike!”

As the Mage Royal God Call had shot was reduced into a stream of white light, the rest of the mercenary group began to comment on what unfolded next.

The unexpected attack left the now party of nine men stunned. Not one of them could tell where the arrow came from as it had vanished along with the Mage’s corpse. Surprisingly, the remaining nine men did not break up to take cover like Gu Fei and the rest of the mercenary group had assumed previously. Instead, they formed a circle with their backs against one another as their eyes darted all over the valley, searching for their attacker.

“They’re pretty well trained!” Gu Fei, who was hiding in the forest, felt a little distressed as he saw his plan fall apart just after the first step.

“No Smile is a veteran with rich gaming experience after all. It looks like these people he’s partied with spent a considerable time training together and aren’t just a random bunch he pulled together,” Young Master Han said lightly.

“So what do we do now?” Gu Fei asked.

“Let him have some fun turtling up first! Hide well, Royal,” Young Master Han reminded.

“Of course. Today, I’ll show them what it means to be an

Archer,” Royal God Call had obviously held a grudge after being chastised by Traversing Four Seas yesterday. Gu Fei had a change of impression about the kid.

It was true that Royal God Call had not attempted to snatch the treasure chest back yesterday mainly because Gu Fei and the female Warrior seemed to be acquainted. Gu Fei had originally thought that the snotty kid would bear a grudge against him. After all, Gu Fei was the reason for Royal God Call’s failure to protect the treasure chest, resulting into him being regarded with contempt by his guild. Yet, Royal God Call did not even show a sliver of attitude toward Gu Fei at the moment, making the kid seem like someone with a steady disposition.

As the six silently watched the nine men slowly rotate while watching their surroundings, Young Master Han decided to quiz them out of boredom, “My fellow teammates... If such a situation were to happen to us some day, how should we react?”

“Hide in the forest,” this was everyone’s consensus.

“That’s right. So, Miles my pal, watch and learn.” As Young Master Han finished saying this, the nine men started to make their way toward the trees once they had seen no trace of movement after that first shot.

“Royal, has the cool-down time for Snipe ended?” Young Master Han asked.

“It ended long ago,” Royal replied.

“Alright, get into position everyone... Attack!” Young Master Han voiced that last command. The whistling of an arrow in flight sounded through the air, and then the Archer, who had the lowest level among the nine, was insta-killed.

However, this arrow revealed Royal God Call’s position to the enemy. “Over there!” the Warrior beside the fallen Archer hollered as he pointed to a direction. The eight decided to cut through the

forest and make their way up the slope toward Royal God Call's last known location.

Sword Demon used this chance to crawl out from behind the huge rock. It was hard for him to keep up with the players since his speed was reduced by the Stealth effect. So he watched as each of their targets passed by him, and did not initiate an attack. When the last of the eight finally had his back to Sword Demon, he released Stealth and activated a level 30 Thief skill called Fleetfoot. Sword Demon, who had been moving at a slow pace, suddenly increased in speed by 15% and sprinted after the Priest trailing behind the party of eight.

The Priest heard the sound of footsteps from behind, but before he could turn around to have a look, Sword Demon had already struck with a Backstab and drove his dagger deep into his waist.

"Ah!" A sharp scream escaped the Priest's lips. Just as what Brother Assist had said, Sword Demon's Backstab truly did not deal sufficient damage to insta-kill the level 30 Priest. Furthermore, the Priest was quite experienced; he immediately stopped screaming and casted Heal on himself. Sword Demon pulled out his dagger from the Priest's wound and stabbed him once more. His attack was negated, however, as it coincided with Heal's effect, allowing the Priest to survive. Sword Demon's heart went cold. He had no more chances left after the two stabs. Everyone had already discovered his presence. And with the two Priests left being able to cast Heal alternately, he could not see any other exploitable opportunities.

As Sword Demon was thinking of this, he heard two consecutive sounds of objects cutting through air swiftly and passing near him. In the next instant, a gasp came out of the Priest's mouth as he fell dead to the ground. The Priest had two arrows lodged in his back as he morphed into a white light. Royal God Call was standing on a distant hill slope looking rather impressive. He raised his right arm high above his head as he gestured a victory sign toward Sword

Demon.

Level 24 Archer skill, Double-shot.

Sword Demon smiled and lifted a thumbs-up high in the air toward Royal God Call as well, quickly retreating from the skirmish.

“You two, go deal with that Archer!” someone from the party of seven called out the order. The two Thieves nodded their heads and activated their level 30 Thief skill Fleetfoot and dashed toward Royal God Call.

“Oh, f*ck! That’s fast!” Royal God Call stopped firing as he made his getaway; allowing the two Thieves to close in on him would only result in his own death.

“Wounds, Brother Assist, aid Royal,” Young Master Han quickly commanded.

“Roger. Royal, nine o’clock by the wooden house,” Brother Assist said.

The opposing party is now left with three Warriors, two Priests, and a Thief; all of them rushed toward Sword Demon with great ferocity.

The Thief had activated his Fleetfoot skill as well, swiftly chasing after Sword Demon as he shouted toward the two Priests behind him, “Don’t let him use Stealth!”

The two Priests quickly shot out their only offensive skill, a mediocre Holy Ball.

Balls of pure holy energy began to form as they chanted their magic incantations. However, Sword Demon had long since retreated and activated his Stealth skill right after flashing his thumbs-up to Royal God Call. Thus, the two energy balls hit nothing but air.

“F*ck!” the Thief, who had intended to confront Sword Demon,

seethed.

“Everyone, be careful,” the Thief reminded the other four behind him as he retreated into the party’s formation. He shouted into the air, “WHO’S MESSING WITH US?!”

“Ahhh!” The reply came in the form of two more cries, which made the Thief swiftly turn his head and look. The two Thieves he had sent after the Archer were just about to catch up to their target when suddenly a Warrior, with Strength boosted by a supporting Knight, came from behind the wooden house. The Warrior roared loudly as he used Cyclone, the most visually impressive skill in the game thus far.

War Without Wounds had successfully staged the ambush and the two Thieves were unable to dodge his Cyclone in time. Just as Cyclone collided with the Thieves, Royal God Call sent a few arrows from behind as well. The two Thieves’ cries of anguish echoed as they turned into streams of white light. A Knight holding on to a commonly used scepter also appeared from behind the wooden house. He patted War Without Wounds, and together with Royal God Call, the three ran abreast back into the battlefield.

Since the start of the battle, half of the ten-man party had already been wiped out. Anyone who had seen the systematic destruction of the party would have felt extremely exhilarated. “JUST WHO THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE?!” the Thief howled crazily.

Another cry resounded as his answer!

As the five leftovers were maneuvering themselves to form into a defensive circle once more, a Priest became the unfortunate recipient of Sword Demon’s Backstab. The Priest, who was mindful of dying, proceeded to quickly cast Heal on himself. Unfortunately, he did not even get the chance to do so as he had been insta-killed by that one thrust.

“Fatal Blow!” The Thief had the same job class so he knew of Backstab’s maximum damage. He was even more aware of his

fellow Priest's defense rating and HP. Insta-killing his Priest companion with Backstab alone meant that Fatal Blow had been procced, and that the percentage of damage dealt must have been substantially high. Sword Demon had naturally performed Backstab on the Intelligence-based Priest with this outcome in mind.

Unfortunately, Sword Demon was not able to run away in time as the opposing party had already formed a defensive circle, easily surrounding him.

“Finish him!” the Thief gave the order as he whirled his own dagger and hurtled it toward Sword Demon. At the same time, his eyes fell upon the dagger in Sword Demon's hand. It would be great if this dagger that dealt Fatal Blow would drop after killing Sword Demon. The weapon was undoubtedly of the highest quality.

The trapped Sword Demon surprisingly did not dodge or avoid their attacks, but instead chose to pounce on the last Warrior head on. Royal God Call was already assisting him at a distance; an arrow with Snipe sped through the valley and struck Sword Demon's target. War Without Wounds and Brother Assist were right behind that arrow as they followed its trajectory right into the fray.

No matter the case, this guy is dead meat! the opposing party collectively thought as they started their assaults on to Sword Demon. Just when they were confidently expecting Sword Demon to drop dead from their attacks, a beam of white light descended onto Sword Demon at the same time their attacks landed on him. Sword Demon only had fighting in his mind. He clenched his teeth and stabbed furiously at the Warrior opposite him. The party's last Priest initially believed that Sword Demon would fall under the combined attacks of the four of them. He did not even think of bestowing Heal on the Warrior beside him as he casted Holy Ball instead, feeling exhilarated at the thought of killing the enemy.

The Warrior hit the ground with a thud after receiving Sword Demon's two stabs and Royal God Call's Snipe.

With the Warrior dead, Sword Demon managed to extricate himself from the encirclement as a beam of white light descended onto him once again. Sword Demon turned around, looking absolutely formidable with the dagger held close to his chest.

The opposing party was taken aback. Heal was casted only twice, yet the timing was so punctual and precise that Sword Demon's life could literally be said to be on a knife edge.

Thief was not a job class with high HP. A blow from each of the two Warriors and one Thief would have been enough to deplete Sword Demon's HP, yet the Priest's miraculous Heal had managed to pull him back from the brink of death. The opposing party had let loose three simultaneous attacks to kill off Sword Demon. Since only a tiny pause in-between their attacks existed, they were initially confident that Sword Demon would succumb to death before any Heal arrived. The only way to prevent Sword Demon from dying was to take advantage of that tiny momentary pause and bestow Heal on him before the last blow landed. This was equivalent to increasing the total HP of Sword Demon in the nick of time, allowing him to survive through their three consecutive blows.

The Heal spell would have no effect if it was not casted just then. It must be done in the gap between their attacks to snatch Sword Demon back from the maws of death, and it was not something anyone could easily do. The three turned and saw a Priest standing at a moderate distance, casting his third Heal to restore Sword Demon's HP back to full.

"JUST WHO THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE?!" this was the third time the opponent had thrown out this question.

"D*mb*ss! Can't you see our covered faces? Why in the world would we tell you our identities?" Young Master Han icily mocked

him as he dashed to block their path of escape.

War Without Wounds and Brother Assist took advantage of this moment when they were talking to dash forward; Royal God Call drew his bow in preparation as well.

The three all tacitly synchronized their attacks, killing the last Priest and Warrior in one fell swoop. At the same instance, the Thief that Sword Demon was assaulting with his dagger suddenly disappeared.

“He’s gone?” Sword Demon was shocked. The way the Thief faded away was just like Stealth; the only difference was that it could be activated under any circumstances. This was not a skill that the current level of Thieves could use.

“It must have been a skill scroll,” Brother Assist furrowed his brows. Given how skill scrolls were not affected by stat requirements, level restrictions, or skill proficiency, even those skills that players had not learned could be used instantly.

“F*ck!” Young Master Han felt extremely exasperated. The guy was very clearly their target, No Smile. Yet, it was beyond everyone’s realm of expectation that he would actually be hiding such a high-tier skill scroll.

They had actually let the final boss slip from under their noses at the last minute. This was definitely a very frustrating occurrence in this game.

Everyone stared toward the valley’s exit. No Smile was most likely smugly making his way over there right now. It was at this moment that Gu Fei’s figure appeared from within the forest. Young Master Han was naturally furious at this person for appearing after everything was over.

Young Master Han was about to curse him when he saw Gu Fei lift his arm holding a sanguine Chinese broadsword to his side.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Gu Fei smiled.

Chapter 43 - Additional Attack

Everyone felt dumbfounded and thought that Gu Fei must have lost his mind. Why else would he be talking to empty space? They watched as Gu Fei took two more steps to his right and pointed Flames of Baptism levelly by the side of his chest, “Yeah, I’m talking to you! Stop running!”

Young Master Han was about to curse at Gu Fei when he saw a person’s figure slowly appear right by the edge of Gu Fei’s blade. The person, who was presently staring bewilderedly at Gu Fei, was the Thief that got away and the sole reason for today’s mission: No Smile.

Silence engulfed the valley as everyone stared at Gu Fei perplexedly. Only Sword Demon looked somewhat unaffected by all this as he had personally experienced this particular occurrence twice in the past.

“Step back,” Gu Fei said faintly.

No Smile had a sudden smile across his face. He had already used Appraisal on Gu Fei, and even though he could not fathom how Gu Fei saw through his invisible state, No Smile knew that he was just a Mage with garbage equipment. Gu Fei was at level 30, yet he was holding a Chinese broadsword called Flames of Baptism.

What? Is he threatening me? No Smile suspected that Gu Fei had just gotten lucky with that initial threat with the blade, and No Smile unwittingly got fooled by his acting. The other five masked men were still relatively far, so he did not hesitate to initiate an assault on Gu Fei.

Only two or three stabs were needed to deal with a Mage at such proximity. It would be difficult to save Gu Fei now, even if there was a Priest close behind them. Everyone, including No Smile, would be remiss to not think so. Young Master Han and the rest had been thinking of this as well, and promptly rushed forward to

aid Gu Fei.

But to their surprise, Gu Fei just casually took a step back and No Smile's thrust failed to connect at all. In return, Gu Fei bent his arm and the Flames of Baptism in his hand slashed at No Smile.

No Smile had not anticipated Gu Fei's fast counterattack and frantically waved his dagger to block it. This was the result of the players spending some time in this highly simulated environment; they no longer relied solely on their HP to withstand attacks.

Astute players had long since found out the importance of grasping a strike's timing, knowing the proper location to land a hit, and so on to exerting the highest damage in their attacks. Conversely, forcing the opponents to miss their attacks required the players to either dodge or block actively. Taking the blow in its entirety only ensured that the attack would connect 100%. There was never a scenario where players missed their attacks simply because they possessed high evasion stats or that their opponents had low attack accuracy.

This sort of realization was not experienced by Gu Fei, however. It was because he had started playing Parallel World with that kind of thought already.

In many ways, his situation was vastly different from the other players. The players right now might have the capability to dodge, yet they lacked the awareness to do so. Another way of looking at it was that the players lacked the insight toward their opponents' attacks. This resulted into them not being able to maximize their fullest potential. In Gu Fei's case, what prevented him from displaying his full potential was not the lack of awareness or insight toward his opponent's attacks, but rather his job class's inherent lack of Strength and Agility.

The players each had intrinsic hurdles to overcome; the ones that prevented them from playing the game at the maximum limit of their characters' abilities.

As for Gu Fei, he had been restricted by the Parallel World's data algorithm itself, preventing him from displaying his full potential in-game.

Once in a while Gu Fei would experience such restrictions. Although Gu Fei could see some attacks clearly, his in-game body was not able to keep up with his eyes. This resulted into his failure to dodge the incoming attacks properly. Hence, Gu Fei could not help but feel irritated when such instances occurred.

Despite all this, Gu Fei's superiority was still far too obvious in front of other players.

No Smile thought that he had successfully blocked the attack with his dagger. However, Gu Fei's slash was a kung fu move that had the propensity to change. The simple horizontal block No Smile had performed just happened to be within the slash's scope of change. With a twirl of Gu Fei's wrist, the slash instantly changed its intended direction, transforming from a vertical slash to a diagonal cut and creating an oblique gash across No Smile's waist.

The sanguine red blade flashed at the same time, and a fiery light enveloped No Smile's body, before finally concentrating into the gash on his waist. The Chinese broadsword's 30% proc rate of additional fire attack had been triggered.

Although Gu Fei had never added stat points to Intelligence, a Mage's initial and subsequent growth rate of it was already high. This was because the Mage job class sacrificed Strength and Endurance growth rate for Intelligence. As Mages leveled up, the Magic Power they possess also began to far outstrip those of the other job classes. Hence, the Fire Damage that Gu Fei had just caused using the Chinese broadsword was naturally higher than what a Warrior could have caused with a similar weapon.

No Smile had no problem taking on the physical strike from Gu Fei's Chinese broadsword, but the fire attack that followed next

was difficult to deal with. Given the low health of the Thief job class, that one attack from Gu Fei had already halved his HP. While he was feeling astonished by all of this, Gu Fei had already scored his second hit.

No Smile tried raising his dagger to block the attack once more, yet he was unable to prevent Gu Fei's skillful strike. Once again, Flames of Baptism slipped through his dagger and carved into his shoulder.

No Smile felt his heart chilled as he shut his eyes to wait for death. However, the fire attack did not get procced this time. Before No Smile could praise his luck for surviving that second blow, Gu Fei's third stroke had already descended.

This ability to attack consecutively was more in line with the Thief job class's combat style. No Smile was utterly flabbergasted. He did not know if it was his Appraisal that failed or if the opponent had a skill that countered Appraisal. An advanced illusion skill?! He had never heard of such a skill!

No Smile did not even try to block the third strike, but instead lunged forward and tried to remove the black cloth covering Gu Fei's face. Gu Fei naturally did not let him succeed; he dodged to the side as his Chinese broadsword unerringly continued its path toward No Smile's body.

The fire attack had been triggered once more, and flames engulfed No Smile entirely. A sudden beam of white light fell onto him at the last moment.

Heal!

No Smile was brought back from the edge of death with that Heal. He turned his head in shock as he stared at the only Priest on the battlefield, Young Master Han.

Gu Fei stopped attacking immediately. Surely, Young Master Han had his reasons for healing an opponent Gu Fei was just about to

finish off. Brother Assist and the rest had originally wanted to help Gu Fei out, but they ended up just standing there and watching Gu Fei unleash his sword strikes at No Smile. They could hardly believe what was happening, especially since it was the first time that they had seen a Mage fight like a Thief. Gu Fei's actions went against their past online gaming knowledge, dazzling them all.

Everyone finally recovered from their dazed expression after Gu Fei finished his three strikes and Young Master Han used his Heal on No Smile. They hastily rushed forward and surrounded No Smile.

Although No Smile was the main target of this mission, everyone's gaze was actually on Gu Fei.

Only Young Master Han still had his mind resolutely on the mission. He stared at No Smile and asked him evenly, "No Smile?"

No Smile nodded as he observed everyone that had surrounded him. All had a cloth strip covering their faces. The one speaking to him had more than a piece of cloth covering his face, actually. He could tell that the person was this group's leader, given how everything had panned out. Could it be that having more cloth masking one's face indicated seniority with this bunch? No Smile's head was clouded by questions, ranging from the initial ambush and the sword-wielding Mage that broke his invisible state to the Priest wearing three pieces of cloth to mask his identity.

"Do you know who we are?" Young Master Han asked.

No Smile shook his head.

"That's good," Young Master Han sighed deeply in relief.

"Cut to the chase," Sword Demon rolled his eyes.

Young Master Han nodded and pointed at No Smile, "You know of Amethyst Rebirth Guild?"

"That's your guild?" No Smile was taken aback. Everyone would often associate July and him to their past altercation, so he

assumed that this person was the same. Hence, he never expected Young Master Han's next words, "I don't know what bone you have to pick with Amethyst Rebirth, but I have two sisters in that guild. As long as you're looking to give that guild trouble, we will trouble you as well, savvy?"

No Smile did not say a word.

Young Master Han did not force him to answer as he continued in a light tone, "Today is just a warning. Alright, we've already killed all your comrades. No reason to spare you since we're here for you..." Young Master Han signaled Sword Demon with a gaze; the Thief stepped forward and made a flurry of strikes. No Smile could only watch on in horror as he got cut down.

"Mission complete!" Young Master Han said.

Everyone nodded and suddenly swarmed to restrain Gu Fei. Brother Assist reached out and pulled Gu Fei's black cloth off his face.

"What are you guys doing?!" Gu Fei felt helpless to what was happening. He could not defend himself from something as unexpected as his friends turning on him. The old adage really held some truth: "Having friends are far scarier than having enemies."

"It really is Miles!" Royal God Call exclaimed.

"The heck are you all talking about?!" Gu Fei was utterly annoyed.

Young Master Han also removed the three pieces of cloth from his face. He walked up to Gu Fei and pulled his head closer for inspection. Gu Fei wanted to resist, but War Without Wounds was the one tugging him from behind; all he needed was his finger to suppress Gu Fei's effort at struggling free.

Young Master Han inspected Gu Fei's face a little and asked Brother Assist, "Is there any skill in-game that alters or disguises a

player's appearance or something similar to that?"

"I don't think so!" Brother Assist who was always certain of his information network seemed to hesitate a little bit when he spoke. He came forward as well to examine Gu Fei's face.

"Hey, that's enough you guys!" Gu Fei said.

"It really is Miles," Brother Assist stated.

"I think so too," Young Master Han concurred.

War Without Wounds let go of Gu Fei, allowing him to put his Chinese broadsword back into his pocket. Everyone began to look at Gu Fei as if he was a monster.

"Miles, did you add stat points to Agility?" Brother Assist asked. This was the first time everyone from the mercenary group, aside from Sword Demon, had had the chance to appreciate Gu Fei's fighting capabilities up close.

Gu Fei nodded his head, "All the points."

Everyone looked at each other.

"Your fighting style... How did you come up with it?" Brother Assist asked carefully. He started to suspect that Gu Fei was actually Parallel World's game employee; this would mean that he had a grasp of the game's algorithm that had not been officially disclosed. Brother Assist could only think of this reason as to why Gu Fei had added all his stat points to Agility at the game's early stages.

"I didn't come up with anything new!" Gu Fei then told them of the injustice of him being forced to become a Mage. He naturally expressed his own annoyance with the Mage job class, as well as how much he had looked forward to becoming a Fighter or even a Warrior. Although Royal God Call was not a Mage, he still had a strong adoration toward the class. Gu Fei's outpour of lamentations caused Royal God Call to comment discontentedly, "F*ck, what's wrong with being a Mage?! It's your sh*t leveling

schema that ruined your Mage!”

“Haaaaah...” Gu Fei sighed, “This is an adult problem that a child like you can’t understand.”

Royal God Call flared his nostrils in contempt.

The others, however, were piqued, “Miles, why’re you so in love with the Fighter job class?”

“That’s because I am a kung fu practitioner in real life,” Gu Fei said.

Chapter 44 - Don't Know What's Good for Them

“Kung fu?”

“Fighter?”

“Practitioner?”

The gang repeated some of Gu Fei's words as they exchanged amused glances with one another.

Gu Fei was used to seeing such reactions. Whenever he tried to talk about his kung fu with others, their faces would display a similar look of disregard. But now that he was inside a VRMMO, he had the perfect environment and condition to demonstrate his kung fu. He brandished the Flames of Baptism and struck a pose, describing his kung fu to others, “Take a look at this kung fu move. Within it lies four different ways of striking, four different ways of countering attacks, and—”

“Alright, that's enough! A real counterattack from the enemies is coming! You need to disguise yourself right now instead of flaunting your moves!”

“Disguise?” Gu Fei could not comprehend that.

“Change your equipment; and the same goes for everyone else,” Young Master Han turned around and said this to the other four.

The four men nodded and quickly changed into simpler attire. Brother Assist explained to Gu Fei, “Even though we have covered our faces, the opponent can still identify our equipment using Appraisal. Plus, No Smile has higher proficiency in appraising than others. Take Sword Demon for example; his Frost Memories is undoubtedly a superb weapon that'll leave a lasting impression on others. That's why we have to change our equipment to ensure that they won't be able to identify us.”

Gu Fei nodded, “But this is all I got.”

“Oh, you don’t really have to change that much,” Young Master Han said, “Just take off that hideous straw hat, remove your horrendous shoes, put away that garbage sword, and suit up properly like a proper Mage.”

Gu Fei followed his instructions as Young Master Han continued, “The mission is not over yet. In fact, it’s only getting started. No Smile has been an active player in the online gaming community for years, so it won’t be that easy to scare him away. I feel that he still has the guts to retaliate against us.”

Brother Assist agreed, “He’s got the backing of the entire Traversing Four Seas Guild as well. I’m guessing that the party we just assaulted has already called for backup.”

Royal God Call nodded, “You’re right. They just asked for reinforcement on the private guild channel.”

“But we’re moving pretty fast ourselves; they shouldn’t be that far ahead yet.” After looking at the time, Young Master Han announced, “Let’s split up, everyone. Move toward Yunliao Farm, which is in the western side of the city, and blend yourselves into the grinding players. Remember to gather information whenever you come across people from Traversing Four Seas. Don’t close the conversation window to keep yourselves updated with everything.”

All nodded and went their own ways after exiting the valley.

“Hey! You guys! Anyone interested in learning some kung fu from me?” Gu Fei asked earnestly.

“There’s always next time, Miles,” Young Master Han patted his shoulder before turning around, “Let’s move.”

Each of them picked a different route, taking care to avoid the main path from Yunxia Valley that led to Yunduan City.

Yunliao Farm was within walking distance of Yunxia Valley. The

farm was populated with monsters ranging from level 25 to 30, and was currently among the most crowded grinding maps. With how cramped it was with players, it was a common occurrence to see players' grinding interrupted due to the demand for monsters by the throng of players far outstripping the rate of respawns. Despite all this, nobody attempted to kill-steal from others, as there was an unspoken rule actively being enforced in the area: Kill-stealers would suffer a combined beating from every other player.

Of course, the unofficial rule was in place not because the surrounding players were virtuous or noble but because everyone was well aware of the monster respawn issue. Hence, all were more than willing to comply with such a fancy excuse to get rid of their fellow competitors. Eventually, this led to players becoming disinclined to kill-steal in Yunliao Farm, and the rise in the number of players being wrongly accused of kill-stealing. Those who were being wrongly accused often shared something in common: They were very strong.

Strong players could grind on monsters at a much faster rate, and this would usually incite the other regular players' resentment. So whenever a spiteful person accused, "This guy is kill-stealing!" many players nearby would play along and 'accidentally' swung their weapons at the accused. Despite how strong the accused player was, he or she could never stand a chance against the combined 'accidental' attacks of more than twenty players. The strong player would not even get a chance to explain and would simply fade away from the promised land.

Yunliao Farm was a very shady place indeed.

Brother Assist was currently sharing these details about the farm to everyone on their private mercenary channel. He reminded everyone to keep a low profile by casually finding a monster and grinding it. Everyone agreed.

Gu Fei examined his surroundings as he arrived at Yunliao Farm, and saw that his fellow teammates had blended themselves well

into the crowd. The others were deliberately making their way to a path, in the middle of the farming field, leading straight to Yunxia Valley. If the members of Traversing Four Seas were here, they would surely go through that road.

Gu Fei saw his fellow teammates following the instructions of Brother Assist. They equipped themselves with the worst weapons, and slowly engaged some monsters. Gu Fei promptly took out his magic staff as well. However, instead of casting a spell, he was using it like a beating stick to fight against a Scarecrow that had just respawned.

A few moments later, sand and dust could be seen getting disturbed from a distance. A group of players were running uniformly in a neat formation toward the direction of Gu Fei and the others. Since the players' stat distribution and equipment from various job classes affected their movement's speed, they were running at an even pace to maintain their battle formation. Otherwise, they would probably get themselves 'accidentally' killed if they charged full speed ahead in a disorderly manner by the time they reached the grinding area.

This group of players from Traversing Four Seas had evidently thought their actions through, choosing to have everyone's running speed matched one another. All sorts of job classes could be seen in the group running across the field. The players in the area stopped grinding, and watched this spectacle instead. "This is my first time seeing such a large-scale movement ever since I've started grinding here. Is something big about to happen?" the players discussed among themselves.

As the group of players sprinted through the central pathway, an experienced player pointed out their emblems while explaining to the nearby players, "They're from Traversing Four Seas."

After hearing this, the nearby players automatically assumed that the Traversing Four Seas' members were currently practicing a large-scale maneuver to hone their potency.

“They’ve caused quite the stir!” Young Master Han spoke through the mercenary channel, “Royal, exactly how many people does your guild have?”

“It just got promoted to a level-3 guild. Right now, it’s at its full capacity with 300 members.”

“How many level 30 members are there?”

“Dude, there’s no numbering next to the ranking. Surely, you don’t expect me to filter through the guild member list?” Royal God Call asked exasperatedly.

“If No Smile knows what’s good for him, he won’t be calling these people here. Too bad! He’s under the delusion that others can back him up. Tsk! Tsk! Let’s play with him again then,” Young Master Han said.

A majority of those from Traversing Four Seas had already run past the farm and were now nearing Yunxia Valley. Only one or two could be seen falling behind the rest as they struggled to keep up. Royal God Call wanted to kill off the players falling behind by ambushing them with his arrows, but Young Master Han stopped him, “They’re searching for us. Won’t your attack let them know that we’re at Yunliao Farm?”

“So what will we do now?” Royal God Call asked.

“We don’t have the strength to kill all of them right now, so we’ll focus on dealing with the leader instead of the minions. Did anyone spot No Smile among the group that just ran past here? ” Young Master Han asked.

“No,” Brother Assist replied confidently.

“That’s his problem; there’s no reason for him to be absent. Maybe, he’s still on his way here considering that we just sent him back to the city’s spawn point. Miles, return to the city and inform us if you see him,” Young Master Han said.

“Okay!” Gu Fei got up and prepared to leave.

“Try to arrive there as fast as you can. Once you’re in the city, head to the Thieves’ Union. No Smile will surely respawn there. Find another chance to get rid of him again! You can solo him, right?” Young Master Han said.

“Of course!” Gu Fei carried his magic staff on his shoulder, whistling as he went on his way.

A Mage who distributed all the points toward Agility was not slow at all as he rushed back to the city. Just as Gu Fei saw the city’s outline after a short run, he caught sight of a figure running toward his direction as well. He looked closely and recognized the figure to be No Smile.

“I’ve spotted No Smile,” Gu Fei whispered onto the mercenary channel.

“Copy that. Let him be for now. Focus on returning to the city. Be sure to send a message after you reach the Thieves’ Union. Brother Assist, you go and have a walk too. Let’s estimate the time it takes for No Smile to reach here, so that we can choose the right place to carry out our assault.”

“No problem!” Gu Fei and Brother Assist delivered the same message at the same time. Gu Fei and No Smile crossed paths just as he finished delivering the message. No Smile did not pay the slightest attention to Gu Fei and just rushed forward with an anxious look on his face.

It did not take Gu Fei long to reach the Thieves’ Union after entering Yunduan City. He looked around the terrain and sent the message, “I’ve arrived.”

And right before that, Brother Assist had managed to encounter No Smile as well. Their plans were quickly laid out once they had been notified of Gu Fei’s arrival to the designated location.

“Here comes No Smile!” Royal God Call yelled into the chatting channel.

“Hey, hey! Give me a live play-by-play!” Gu Fei who was unable to witness everything in real time did not wish to miss out on the excitement.

“Allow me, then!” Royal God Call volunteered himself.

“No Smile is coming over! He’s coming over! Coming over alone... He’s holding a dagger, which represents the glorious tradition of Thieves. He’s now walking on the pathway on the field. He’s not looking around him at all and is simply just making his way forward... He takes a step forward, two steps forward, three steps—oh, I am sorry! I should have counted the steps backward; it’s more exciting that way!”

“Uhhh... Sorry, I don’t know which steps I should start counting from if I’m doing a countdown. I’ll just count the steps like normal. One step forward, two steps forward, three steps forward, getting close now—he’s getting closer with every step he takes! Seven, and eight! He’s here!”

“The fight is on! Sword Demon, who’s been hiding himself using Stealth in the middle of the road, begins his assault. Just as No Smile has walked past him, he turns his body deftly and unleashes Backstab deep into—I am sorry, I can’t really see if that’s the waist or the butt. No Smile turns around with ‘no smile’ on his face! Unfortunately, all he can see is a face covered with a black cloth. No Smile attempts to yank the cloth away but loses his chance as Sword Demon has viciously stabbed him once more! Hey, Sword Demon! I think you should just let him yank that piece of cloth away from your face. Who knows? He might drop his equipment if you scare him to death with that face of yours.”

“Scram!” Sword Demon, who had taken care of No Smile, sent over a message with just a single word.

“Miles, how are things on your end?” Young Master Han asked.

“Oh, he’s in my line of sight,” Gu Fei replied.

Gu Fei saw No Smile fuming with rage as he dashed out of the Thieves' Union. He was so flustered and angry that he spun on the spot twice; his sense of direction probably clouded by his anger. Afterward, he just bent his head forty-five degree downward and stared at the ground dazedly.

“Well, it's my turn to act now. Unfortunately, I'll be too busy to give everyone a live play-by-play,” Gu Fei covered his face with the piece of black cloth that he had taken out and put on the straw hat on his head. Hiding the Flames of Baptism on his back, he hurried toward No Smile.

Chapter 45 - Pursuit

Gu Fei managed to reach No Smile's back unnoticed, as the latter was deep in his thoughts. Thinking that it would be boring to attack No Smile from behind, Gu Fei walked to his front instead, "Hey!"

No Smile raised his head upon hearing the voice and saw a face covered by a piece of black cloth. He jumped up to his feet like he had been stung and fled without putting up a fight.

"This has become more boring than fighting regular monsters," Gu Fei sadly thought before rushing forward to slash at No Smile.

Thieves initially had an edge in terms of Agility, but No Smile had distributed a majority of his stat points to Strength. He had just dropped two levels as well, so his speed was inferior to a Mage who had distributed all his stat points to Agility. Although Mages did not have the upperhand for Agility, they at least did not suffer any handicap for that particular stat.

Gu Fei was rather jaded with the current process of chasing and slashing No Smile. No Smile's mind was set on retreating to the safe zone, so he just kept on running desperately. Unfortunately for him, Gu Fei was the one with superior speed. Gu Fei sliced at No Smile with his every step. Although the Flames of Baptism's fire attack did not proc even once, Gu Fei still managed to slay No Smile right before the latter reached the safe zone. Waves of exclamation thundered from the surrounding players after seeing No Smile go down.

Gu Fei sighed heavily. No Smile, who had respawned inside the Thieves' Union for the third time, currently looked very pissed. No Smile began to utter profanities while he pointed at Gu Fei. Gu Fei turned a deaf ear to his curses, shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly, and left the Thieves' Union as he waved goodbye at No Smile.

“How was it, how was it?” There were at least over a hundred inquiries from Young Master Han and the others on the mercenary channel.

“It’s settled!” Gu Fei replied promptly.

“Did he drop any equipment?” Young Master Han asked.

“No,” Gu Fei answered.

“Really? What’s with his luck? Not one piece of equipment was dropped after dying thrice?” Everyone doubted Young Master Han’s real motive after he had said that. Was Young Master Han’s order to kill No Smile thrice intended to erode the enemy’s morale, or to acquire the enemy’s equipment for himself?

“Well one more time, then!” Royal God Call was more honest with his intention, “I’m still not convinced that he won’t be dropping any equipment every time he’s killed.”

“What’s his face like when he saw you?” Young Master Han asked Gu Fei.

“Afraid. Very afraid.”

“What about when he was killed?”

“Pissed. Very pissed.”

“What about now?”

“I’ve left the place. He’s probably currently calling for help to take care of me,” Gu Fei said.

“A level 30 Mage wearing beginner robe might draw unwanted attention. You’ll have to buy a random mage robe to replace what you’re wearing now,” Young Master Han said.

“If possible I’d like one with a higher defense; it’s even better if it boosts Agility or Strength. Any recommendations?” Gu Fei consulted the experts. Although he had become better informed about this stuff due to his previous research online, he would never dare consider his opinion to hold the same weight as these

professional gamers.

“Shadowy Cloak usually boosts Agility, while Mighty Cloak usually boosts Strength; you can pick from these two!” Sword Demon offered his suggestion to Gu Fei, “These cloaks’ defense may not be comparable to a Warrior’s armor, but at least you can equip them. Armor is considered as heavy-type equipment, which can only be equipped if you’ve got enough Strength. You didn’t allocate points to Strength, right?”

“Nope. Not yet. Maybe next time!” Gu Fei said.

Everyone was speechless.

“Anyway, just get yourself a regular mage robe. Considering how cloaks are usually favored by Thieves rather than Mages, you’ll just be more conspicuous if you wear one. I guarantee that you’re the only Mage in this city who would even think of doing that,” Young Master Han said.

“A Mage wearing a cloak... Guys, I feel like crying...” Royal God Call said.

“Save your tears for later when Miles equips himself with heavy armor!” Brother Assist tried to cheer him up.

“As a Mage, your stat point distribution is all over the place. I think recruiting a REAL Mage is in order,” Young Master Han said.

Royal God Call lamented, “If only I had chosen to be a Mage....”

“Enough with all that. Let’s get down to business,” Young Master Han said, “We’ll head back to the city now. Miles, keep an eye on No Smile. If it’s possible, try to sound him out to see if he has given up on his revenge.”

“So am I supposed to buy new clothes or sound him out?” Gu Fei asked.

“Think about it yourself!” Young Master Han said in exasperation.

Gu Fei pondered about it, New equipment is available for purchase any time. But if I don't deal with No Smile now, I probably won't get another chance in the future. With that in mind, Gu Fei returned to the Thieves' Union. He hid himself behind a nearby wall and took a peek. No Smile was still there, sitting and brooding by himself at the building's entrance.

Gu Fei remained cautious, suspecting that No Smile had already called for reinforcement. After checking the surroundings for a while, Gu Fei made up his mind. He moved closer to the Thieves' Union's entrance, got into the shadowy corner of a wall when no one was looking, and quickly put on the cover for his face. Gu Fei then stepped out of the wall and appeared right in front of No Smile. No Smile quickly scrambled back into the safe zone in shock.

Gu Fei had a calm smile on his face; it was such a shame that nobody would get to admire it since his face was covered by a piece of cloth. He leaned on the wall and raised his head high to greet No Smile, "Hey!"

No Smile's eyes were filled with hatred as he stared intently at Gu Fei.

The distance between them was just a single footstep. However, this single footstep was the difference between life and death in this VRMMO. Inside the safe zone, No Smile was able to stand tall and glare at Gu Fei as he said, "Just what do you lot want from me?"

"Haven't we told you before?" Gu Fei said.

"But you—"

Gu Fei knew what No Smile was going to say so he interrupted him straight away, "You indeed stopped messing with Amethyst Rebirth, but you started messing with us instead! What you're doing now is far crazier and more dangerous than before. We've got no choice but to kill you thrice to help you wise up a little.

Now, the group has sent me over to ask you this: How're things going? Have you wised up yet?"

"Just who the hell are you people?!" No Smile's expression seemed like someone who was about to go crazy.

"What's the point of asking that again and again? We aren't kids anymore. Grow up," Gu Fei said.

"Fine, grow up," No Smile nodded, "Grow up, my a*s!" he suddenly yelled at the top of his lungs and plunged himself toward Gu Fei. Seeing how he dashed forward without even holding a dagger, there was no doubt he was trying to cling on to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei had known No Smile's intention from the very start. He sidestepped and swung the Flames of Baptism horizontally with a reverse-grip. The Chinese broadsword slashed No Smile, and flames began to scorch his body. Gu Fei turned his wrist, and performed a downward slash onto No Smile's back again. At the same instant, he raised his leg and kicked No Smile's butt, using the momentum from it to retreat into the safe zone.

No Smile, who was in the middle of tackling forward, was shoved to the front forcefully by Gu Fei's kick. Unfortunately for him, Gu Fei's second slash inflicted another burst of fire attack. No Smile dove toward a few people who had positioned themselves to catch his falling body, yet all they grabbed a hold of was No Smile's ray of disappearing white light.

Gu Fei glanced at the Traversing Four Seas' emblems pinned on the different parts of these few people's bodies and sighed, "The killing intent from you lot is too obvious!"

These people were still engrossed with what had just happened.

No Smile had arranged for his guild members to be around the area to prepare for the masked man's arrival. He did not truly wish for Gu Fei's death, as getting a good look of his face was No Smile's main priority. Only this way could he find out who these people

were and slowly plan his revenge.

Gu Fei's sudden appearance had initially delighted No Smile. The reason No Smile had spoken to Gu Fei was to buy some time for his underlings to seal off all possible exits for the latter. His initial plan was to have Gu Fei grabbed by his underlings from the front and the back. However, No Smile had not expected Gu Fei to skillfully evade the assault. It even appeared as if Gu Fei had seen through his plan, managing to finish him off once more during the scuffle.

In the eyes of an average human being, Gu Fei's movement just then was incredibly fast.

However, it was not actually Gu Fei's speed but his tempo that was fast. He unleashed an attack at the same instant that he was dodging. As the first slash connected, Gu Fei changed the blade's angle to another, allowing him to seamlessly follow up with the next strike. Before this second strike ended, Gu Fei's kick shoved No Smile forward as the Chinese broadsword's fire attack burned out his HP.

Simply put, regular players usually unleash their attacks in four consecutive steps, whereas Gu Fei actually execute two moves at once, forming a two-step combination attack in the nimblest way possible. This attack method combined offense and defense instantaneously. Therefore, only one word could describe the others' feelings upon witnessing Gu Fei's attack: fast!

Gu Fei was currently in the safe zone, so the six players from Traversing Four Seas outside could not do anything to him.

No Smile, who had just respawned in the safe zone, seemed to have lost his mind. He roared and charged straight toward Gu Fei while swinging his hands in the air wildly, looking to pull off that black piece of cloth on Gu Fei's face. But Gu Fei remained motionless this time, as if he did not see No Smile at all.

No Smile's hands were about to grab hold of the black piece of cloth on Gu Fei's face when they suddenly stopped mid air.

Gu Fei shook his head, “You didn’t read the game’s instructions clearly; we’re now in a safe zone used for logging off. It’s impossible for players to have physical contact with each other. What’s the point of having safe zones like this if you lot can toss me outside from here and beat me up?!”

No Smile’s arms trembled as they remained suspended mid air. He had died four times in a row, and now he was challenging the game’s system design. It was only normal for his attempt to break the no physical-contact policy in the safe zone to not work at all. At the next moment, an idea popped up in his mind, and he proceeded to puff up his cheeks and blew at Gu Fei’s face.

Gu Fei could not believe his eyes, “Are you an idiot? When I said physical contact is impossible, that includes blowing air with your mouth to remove the cloth from my face!”

Finally, No Smile was out of options and he sat down on the ground dejectedly.

As Gu Fei stared at No Smile, he started to sympathize with him a little. Gu Fei could not help but console him, “Just let this be man. You’re actually pretty lucky considering that you didn’t drop any equipment even after dying four times.”

No Smile did not react in the slightest way; it was a wonder if he even heard Gu Fei’s consoling words.

Gu Fei shook his head. He was about to leave when he saw a few players from Traversing Four Seas boldly blocking the entrance. Evidently, they were not planning to let Gu Fei escape.

Chapter 46 - Leaving with a Swagger

“Well, look at what we have here...” Gu Fei turned around and squatted beside No Smile. He pointed at the few people blocking the Thieves’ Union’s entrance, “It seems that you still don’t get it.”

No Smile stared at him expressionlessly, not saying a word. The people outside the entrance did not disperse but increased in number instead. Gu Fei sighed as he opened the mercenary group channel, “No Smile sure is gutsy. I’ve killed him too many a time, yet he still dared to have me surrounded.”

“Why aren’t you dead, then?” Young Master Han asked.

“I’m squatting in the safe zone!” Gu Fei said.

“Can you get out?” Young Master Han asked.

“Let me give it a shot,” Gu Fei said as he got up.

“We’ll be there shortly,” Young Master Han reassured him on the conversation window.

“No need to,” Gu Fei said, “Their number will just keep on increasing. Even if we group up, we can’t go up against all the Traversing Four Seas’ three hundred members. It’s better if I fight my way out while there’re still few of them.”

“Alright, good luck then. We’re off to the bar,” Young Master Han agreed easily.

Gu Fei was speechless at his lackadaisical response.

The long robes of Mages had the tendency to drag on the ground, getting in the way of movement. So when he was getting up, Gu Fei picked up the hem of his robe and tucked it into his waist. With his hand still holding the Flames of Baptism, he said to No Smile, “I’m leaving!”

No Smile looked at him in astonishment. Ten players of Traversing Four Seas were now gathered outside the Thieves’

Union, with many more on their way, yet this person actually dared to face them head on... Did he think he was a GM?

Even those blocking the exit outside had not expected to hear such a bold statement from Gu Fei. They were prepared for a 'seige', either hoping for No Smile and Gu Fei to reach an understanding in the safe zone or expecting for the Mage's companions to arrive and assist Gu Fei in engaging them into a bloody battle outside the safe zone. But as things stood right now, Gu Fei seemingly intended to solo them all.

Gu Fei slowly stepped out of the safe zone with his face still covered by the piece of black cloth. No one could see his facial expression, yet his aura unconsciously made everyone feel apprehensive. They had to constantly remind themselves, There's nothing to be afraid of. We outnumber him! Although they kept on repeating this mantra to themselves, their minds still could not help flashing back the scene earlier when Gu Fei had made short work of No Smile. They could not fathom what method he had used to accomplish such a feat.

Gu Fei shortly arrived at the Thieves' Union's door. As soon as he got there, he launched himself forward.

Gu Fei's one leap was akin to him crossing the realms of life and death. At the same instant, the Flames of Baptism started dancing in his hand.

There were three reasons why no one was able to dodge Gu Fei's ensuing attacks. First, he was a Mage with agile movement due to his allocation of all his stat points to Agility. Second, the attacks he unleashed were unfathomable and went beyond the abilities of everyone present. Last, Gu Fei was able to vary his attacks according to the battle flow even when they missed at first.

His first strike mercilessly rent the Mage casting a spell by the side.

Although Gu Fei did not learn Appraisal, he could still tell the job

classes of these players with a glance. This was because their equipment was dictated by their in-game job classes. For example, Mages wore robes, Thieves donned cloaks, and Warriors equipped heavy armor. Through his knowledge of their gear, Gu Fei could easily tell the type of job class each of them had with great accuracy.

Gu Fei's first cleave with his Chinese broadsword might not have insta-killed the Mage, but it at least disrupted his spell-casting. Although Gu Fei had a keen close combat sense, he was still wary of mage spells. This was especially the case with the beginner spell Fireball, which could track his movement and hamper his technique execution for a short amount of time.

Besides that strike with his Chinese broadsword, Gu Fei managed to kick another player as well. Even though the kick was not backed by a strong force, it was still able to drive the player a few steps backward, which in turn stopped the other two players at Gu Fei's rear from rushing at him.

Once Gu Fei had landed on his feet, he spun the Flames of Baptism and hurtled it toward the Mage. The Mage was unable to deal with Gu Fei's attack with his low HP and average speed. The magic staff in his hand could not block the attack as well, making the Mage frustrated with it. The last hit procced the Flames of Baptism's fire attack. Despite the Mage job class' high magic resistance, its weak physical defense and meager HP ensured that the Mage could not survive Gu Fei's two attacks.

With the Chinese broadsword in hand, Gu Fei was completely fired up and itching for a fight. Even though the group of people that had been blocking his way out only tried to subdue him, Gu Fei still took the initiative and killed one of their own. No Smile largely contributed to his fellow guild members' inability to deal with Gu Fei as well, since he had continually been shouting this instruction from within the safe zone, "Don't kill him! Just take off that cloth masking his face!"

No Smile was worried that Gu Fei would be shredded to death by the concerted attack of his fellow guild members. If that happened, No Smile would be unable to find out Gu Fei's identity, as the latter would be sent back to the Mage Academy's spawn point. Hence, No Smile made the same mistake that Cao Cao did in the past.

As the story went, Cao Cao made the fatal mistake during the Battle of Changban of issuing this order, "Nobody fires an arrow. Capture them alive!" which gave Zhaoyun the chance to carry Liu Bei's son across the battlefield in his bloodied robe and escaped.

However, Cao Cao made that critical error in judgment back then because he was greatly emboldened by his army of a million men. No Smile, on the other hand, only had ten men, yet he still saw it fit to emulate such a historical figure. Within the time-frame of his command, Gu Fei managed to kill off the Mage. The remaining nine men rushed to avenge their fallen comrade, but felt somewhat troubled when they heard No Smile's order once more.

Normal players could neither control their attack to the point of consistently causing maximum damage like Gu Fei nor maintain attack with minimum damage. Hence, the Warriors carrying bulky weapons were at a loss of what to do, fearing that their immense strength would result into Gu Fei's death.

Gu Fei was not a reckless fool through and through. Before making the decision to break through this blockade, Gu Fei had already judged that he was more than capable of dealing with these ten men. No Smile's order had caused them to become hesitant in their attacks, staring at Gu Fei confusedly as they thought of how to deal with him. Gu Fei thought No Smile was being such a wet blanket, so he threw him a death glare.

That glare apparently meant nothing to No Smile as he continued to holler, "Grab him! Grab him! Take off that piece of cloth! Take it off!"

The men kept their weapons ready as they rushed forward,

intending to tackle Gu Fei to the ground. Unfortunately, Gu Fei's wielding of his Chinese broadsword was very dynamic; he weaved the Flames of Baptism in and out among them, quickly killing the two players with low HP. One of the Warriors, who had prided himself as someone with a substantial amount of HP, decided to bet on it as he forcefully attempted to capture Gu Fei. The whole situation evolved into a situation wherein Gu Fei was like a little chick evading the swooping talons of these players of Traversing Four Seas. But Gu Fei's combat prowess truly outclassed these Warriors, resulting into them not even catching the hem of Gu Fei's robe.

Two more fell from Gu Fei's swordplay in the next instance, with one of them being the Warrior who had disregarded Gu Fei's damage output with his high HP.

No Smile finally realized how terrible his previous command was. Unfortunately, it was too late for regrets now, and he could only watch everything unfold. In an attempt to avoid the ire of the people who had come to assist him, he shouted encouragingly, "Just hang in there until the reinforcement arrives."

People would probably assume that Gu Fei was the one who had surrounded these people with a huge army after hearing No Smile's words without the visual cues.

Gu Fei had heard No Smile's words as well and considered the futility of his current predicament.

Gu Fei's Attack Power was substantial as long as the additional fire damage from Flames of Baptism's fire attack was added into the equation. The problem lay with the attribute only having a 30% proc rate, which was something Gu Fei could not overcome with technique. This caused his Chinese broadsword to have maximum and minimum attack he had no control over, making it awkward for Gu Fei as he fought on.

His single stroke in fact had contained a number of follow-up

attacks that could extend his combo, yet the additional fire attack got triggered and immediately killed off the opponent. Another scenario was when he had used the Chinese broadsword to strike to his left, hoping for the fire attack to get procced and kill off the target, which would have allowed him to focus on another enemy on the right. Unfortunately, that did not happen and he was forced to adjust his battle plan accordingly.

The fire attack's infrequency helped as well as disrupted the fighting tempo of Gu Fei, affecting his overall performance. While this was somewhat negligible in a one-versus-one fight, it was somewhat troublesome in a one-versus-many brawl like now.

Out of the original ten people blocking Gu Fei's exit, five had been struck down. Yet he had eight more targets left to fight, as their number had increased once more.

It looked like his plan to wipe out all ten people was not very realistic. Even if he were to exclude the ones that just came in to provide support, just the return of the two Thieves Gu Fei had killed off once made continuing the fight seemed pointless. Since this was the Thieves' Union's entrance, they simply respawned and joined the fight with Gu Fei again. Furthermore, No Smile's command to not kill him but find out his identity made everyone less pressured of having to achieve victory. In fact, the two Thieves had taken off their sets of equipment to prevent them from losing durability and fought Gu Fei topless.

Gu Fei's attacks were no longer limited to his Chinese broadsword, as punches and kicks were thrown into the mix as well. He was doing everything he could to fend them off. Although the people were being summarily beaten by Gu Fei, they figured that they at least had him surrounded. However, they all failed to realize the truth of the situation; Gu Fei was not actually being trapped by them, but rather he was choosing to stay put. Now that he had made the decision to leave, he largely twirled his Chinese broadsword twice. The resulting gap due to the opponents' evasion

allowed Gu Fei to slip right through and escape the encirclement.

No Smile assumed as well that his plan to trap Gu Fei had succeeded. So when he saw Gu Fei breaking out of the blockade, he attributed it to these people's blunder. He impatiently shouted, "Quick, quick! Surround him! Surround him once more!" He even risked his life and ran out of the safe zone.

However, Gu Fei had already bolted a few meters ahead. No Smile pointed at Gu Fei's fleeing figure and hollered at the two Thieves, "Fleetfoot! Quickly activate your Fleetfoot!"

The two Thieves cried, "We just dropped a level so we can't use Fleetfoot anymore."

One of them cried even louder, "My Fleetfoot has already lost a bit of proficiency."

No Smile's heart chilled upon hearing the Thieves' words. He had almost forgotten about his losses. Seeing that his level dropped by four and his equipment durability reduced to zero, No Smile could only thank his luck for not having lost any equipment yet. No Smile had grinded the level 30 skill Fleetfoot to a relatively high proficiency, but now it was all gone.

Just as he was feeling saddened by his losses, he saw Gu Fei suddenly stop fleeing ahead. No Smile lightened up and quickly ordered everyone to catch up.

Gu Fei himself started running back toward them, while seemingly mumbling something. Everyone was taken aback by this and all involuntarily slowed down. Gu Fei abruptly turned around and ran away once more.

"F*ck, we've been tricked!" No Smile bellowed in his anger. When they started to slow down before, the distance was increased further as Gu Fei ran off once more.

All were vexed as they once again quickened their pace. Suddenly, a fiery glow appeared before their eyes as a fire dragon

formed mid air and changed into a mass of fireballs that flew toward them.

“Ahhh!” all of them shrieked in anguish as they got bombarded by the spell unceasingly.

All the Traversing Four Seas’ guild members besides No Smile suffered a number of slashes from Gu Fei’s Chinese broadsword, and they had yet to recover from those fully; hence, the spell just now sent two players back to the safe zone.

Level 30 Mage spell, Repeating Fireball.

Although the topless No Smile did not die, he was not able to escape the explosion’s range unscathed. As he fought back his tears, he could no longer hold back himself from heaving a long frustrated sigh, “Arghhh! I forgot that he’s a Mage!”

Chapter 47 - Taking the City by Storm

The fleeing Gu Fei suddenly thought of unleashing Repeating Fireball on to the Traversing Four Seas' guild members who were presently chasing after him. This was the first time he had considered using a spell in an actual fight. Initially, he had only been trying to delay them for a bit so that he could make a successful getaway, yet the end result was actually gratifying: Two opponents were eliminated.

Unfortunately, Gu Fei saw players charging toward his direction from every street corner. They were probably the additional backup called here by No Smile. Gu Fei had to give up his plan of returning to kill No Smile, the sole survivor among his three original pursuers, and focused on escaping from the scene of the crime.

Gu Fei threw the pursuers off his track by circling the chaotic streets of Yunduan City. He then found a quiet and isolated alley to take the straw hat off his head, remove the piece of black cloth covering his face, and put away the Flames of Baptism. After doing all this, he blatantly walked out of the alley with a magic staff in hand.

More and more players could be seen heading toward the Thieves' Union, with a handful being members of Traversing Four Seas and the rest being the onlookers. Gu Fei felt bad for them since there was nothing to see over there anymore.

Gu Fei, the culprit, walked nonchalantly on the streets and reached Ray's Bar in no time. Ray was already quite familiar with their gang of six, especially when two out of the rest could leave a lasting impression with their looks alone. As Gu Fei entered the bar, Ray greeted him with a smile and pointed toward their usual room.

Gu Fei walked over and lifted the curtain to take a look inside. He

saw that these five were truly men of their words, as they truly went drinking at Ray's Bar after saying that they would!

The five raised their heads and saw Gu Fei. Young Master Han looked at the time and said, "Six minutes."

"Sorry, guys. It's my win," Sword Demon said blankly, and then he laid his hand with palm up onto the table.

The other four put their hands dolefully into their pockets, each taking 5 gold coins out and tossing them onto the table. Sword Demon collected the coins with absolutely no consideration for the others, before reaching his hand out again toward Royal, "You should be giving me ten."

"Oh, come on! It's just a casual remark! You can't be taking that seriously?!" Royal God Call was not pleased.

"Of course, I'm taking that seriously. A man should always mean what he said," Sword Demon's hand was still hanging out toward him.

"Just give it to him. Otherwise, we can't continue drinking," Young Master Han said.

Royal God Call unwillingly handed additional 5 gold coins to Sword Demon.

The five only started paying attention to Gu Fei after settling their little dispute. Young Master Han took the lead and applauded, "Welcome! A warm welcome to our top slayer!"

Gu Fei stared at Sword Demon, who was putting the gold coins into his pocket, and asked, "What's all this about?"

"Oh, it's nothing really. We're making a bet on how long it would take you to fight your way out from there," Young Master Han said.

"Betting, eh? And Sword Demon won?" Gu Fei sat down while saying that.

Sword Demon nodded.

“Well half of that ought to be mine!” Gu Fei laughed.

Sword Demon nodded again. He reached into his pocket and took out the gold coins. After counting the coins thoroughly, he separated 12 gold and 50 silver coins from his pile and pushed them toward Gu Fei, “Half for you and half for me.”

Gu Fei felt stunned, as he was simply joking with Sword Demon. Young Master Han let out a long sigh, “Just take it! Remember not to joke with those who lack a sense of humor next time.”

Sword Demon remained very serious, “You earned it. I’d split the coins with you anyway even if you didn’t say that.”

Gu Fei was laughing dryly at Sword Demon, “In that case, thanks!” He put the coins inside his pocket while Royal God Call looked on with a sorrowful expression.

“So what happened? How is No Smile now?” Young Master Han asked Gu Fei.

“I don’t know. I came here straight after breaking through that blockade. You’re not expecting me to go back and have a talk with him after all that, right? There’re quite a lot of them over there now,” Gu Fei said.

Royal God Call nodded, “Those heading to Yunxia Valley have been summoned back as well.”

“Has No Smile said anything yet on the guild channel?” Young Master Han asked Royal God Call.

Royal God Call stared intently at the chat history of the guild channel, “Hmm... Everyone is either asking what happened to him or the identities of his attackers. But he has remained silent all throughout.”

“Oh, wait! He posted something!” Royal God Call said suddenly.

“What did he post?”

“Avenge me, my fellow brothers!” Royal God Call read it out loud for everyone.

Everyone looked at one another.

“That guy is such a pain in the a*s,” Young Master Han sighed.

“But if he starts holding a grudge against us, he’ll stop messing with Amethyst Rebirth, right? Our mission is complete, then,” Brother Assist reasoned.

“Not likely. He doesn’t know who we are, so how’s he going to hold a grudge against us? In the end, he can only vent his anger on to Amethyst Rebirth,” Young Master Han said.

“I think our approach to this mission might be somewhat skewed from the get-go,” Gu Fei said, “No Smile and July’s Heat’s online drama happened way back. Him being this vindictive after all this time proves just how petty he is. Wasn’t he the one in the wrong for whatever that had happened in the past? Yet here he is, stirring things up in Parallel World by sabotaging Amethyst Rebirth’s guild quest. That means he’s malicious as well. He even said ‘Avenge me, my brothers!’ even though we killed him four times already, which indicated how vindictive he is. He’ll eventually become a scourge if he remains in this game. He’ll probably jump out and harm others whenever the opportunity presents itself.”

“What could we do? Kick him out of the game? That’s impossible no matter how capable we are,” Young Master Han said.

Gu Fei was about to share his thoughts to everyone when Brother Assist said, “Why don’t we check the aftermath of the situation first before we decide on our next step?”

Everyone nodded in agreement. And with that, Gu Fei swallowed what he was about to say.

Meanwhile, most of the people’s conversations everywhere in Yunduan City seemed to revolve around a major affair that had just occurred. The news spread at an unprecedented rate since

people were sharing it across various chatting channels.

There had not been any PvP situation involving an entire guild since the game's released. And yet today, the members of Traversing Four Seas, the largest guild in Yunduan City, were seen rushing toward Yunxia Valley from the city, before hastily making their way back from the valley toward the Thieves' Union in the city.

According to the eyewitnesses at Yunliao Farm, No Smile of Traversing Four Seas was passing by the central pathway when a Thief on Stealth suddenly revealed himself. The Thief, whose face was covered by a piece of black cloth, killed No Smile before leaving casually.

An onlooker from the Thieves' Union described what he saw as well. A hotshot, whose face was covered by a piece of black cloth, slashed No Smile to his death with a Chinese broadsword. This masked man left for a while before returning to hack No Smile again, casually leaving the fight after breaking through the encirclement formed by numerous people.

Afterward, an interested player tallied the exact time when No Smile had been executed in the two different places, and realized that there was a connection between the two incidents. Combined with the fact that the slayers had their faces covered with a piece of black cloth, he came to a conclusion: This was a well thought-out and organized assassination attempt that targeted No Smile.

'No Smile' was a famous IGN, so it was not long before someone recalled the previous online drama associated with the name. Everyone learned that 'July's Heat' was still an unoccupied IGN after searching for it in Parallel World. Although there were people who believed that July's Heat was the mastermind behind all these, they lacked solid proof as she was unavailable for questioning.

This matter had caused quite a ruckus all over the city, so the

ladies of Amethyst Rebirth were already aware of it. July had summoned all the members back to the guild house at the first chance she got.

The others, except for Luo Luo, were unaware that the current affair was related to the past online drama. Now that the issue had escalated to such a scale, it was pointless to bury the truth. Nobody, with the exception of Xiaoyu, would believe July even if she claimed that she did this purely because their guild quest had been sabotaged. July received unanimous support from all the ladies after she had come clean to everyone and explained everything about her past conflicts with No Smile and her reason for hiring a mercenary group to deal with him.

July did not intend to associate with him, and it was No Smile who had started this whole mess by interfering with their guild quest. No matter how mild-mannered a lady was, she would still snap when dealing with a prick like No Smile. Take the ill-tempered Lie Lie for example; she had already kicked a nearby stool after hearing July's confession and told everyone that she was leaving to beat No Smile's sorry a*s.

Of course, she was restrained by the others immediately. July solemnly said to everyone, "I asked for outsiders' help because it's clear that the opposing party is leagues beyond us. What happened in the city just now is probably their doing. But with my understanding of No Smile, simply killing him a few times is not enough to intimidate him. This matter is far from over, so please be careful out there, everyone. It'll be best if... you can all remain offline for a few days."

"Sis July, hiding is not the answer! We have to fight as well!" a lady said emotionally.

"But—"

"Sis July, don't worry about us. It's just a game! PvP is part of the game. It's not like we're trying to trample everyone here. So what

if we lose a few levels when we die? It's nothing scary!"

"Yeah!"

"Everyone, please calm down," Luo Luo stood up and said, "It's true that receiving a level drop after dying is not scary. But we can't just die for nothing! Traversing Four Seas is the largest guild in Yunduan City, with a total of 300 members! The number of level 30 players that that guild has even surpasses the total member of our guild! We'd be facing high caliber players in such a kind of PvP engagement. How much fight can any here bring to the table at such standard? "

Everyone turned silent. Even Lie Lie, who excelled in PvP matches in this VRMMORPG, was tongue-tied. Although she disagreed with Luo Luo's opinion, objecting right now would make things awkward for Luo Luo. She might have a bad temper, but even she had a soft spot inside her.

Seeing that nobody spoke, Luo Luo continued, "Which is why everyone should listen to July's advice for now. Be careful out there, and avoid clashing with others. As for what comes next, just leave everything to July, me, Lie Lie, Xiaoyu, and those people that we've asked for help. What does everyone think?"

All the ladies nodded. The other three mentioned by Luo Luo conformed as well. This was a natural arrangement as July was the involved party, Luo Luo was the guild's highest level Priest, Lie Lie was their best PvP fighter, and Xiaoyu had the highest level among them. Speaking of 'highest level', Xiaoyu asked softly, "Are we not calling Miles?"

"What's the point of calling him?" Lie Lie said impatiently, "He's just a trashy Mage. What use could his high level be?"

July nodded as well, "Let's not bother him with this!"

"Let's go!" Luo Luo said, "I need to contact that mercenary group. Let's meet up with them first."

The four left the guild house after saying this. As they arrived on the street, towering shadows from a large crowd could be seen blocking their way. The one leading them was none other than No Smile.

“It’s been a while, July!”

Chapter 48 - Not a Zero-Sum Game

The four ladies immediately thought of retreating, but they saw another bunch of people blocking the other side of the street. July quickly posted a message on the guild channel, “Everyone, stay put inside the guild house for now.”

When the ladies asked why, July only replied, “Listen to me.” When July and the three ladies looked back, they saw that the people blocking the other side of the street had moved forward. The ladies did not know whether they just happened to stop in front of Amethyst Rebirth’s headquarters or purposely stopped there. July could hear her heart thumping loudly as she reemphasized her message to the ladies inside the guild house. July sighed in relief when everyone followed, huddling together within and making no more rash movement.

One side of the street had been completely blocked off. Although the road over here was spacious, No Smile had brought along quite a number of people. The resulting gaps got filled up quickly by the onlookers as well, making passing through them impossible. Furthermore, the combined strength of the four of them was not enough to breakout from this airtight human net.

“What do you want?” July could only confront the person whom she had always been trying to avoid meeting.

“What do I want?” No Smile spat back, cackling for a while before he replied, “I know you sent those people my way to f*ck with me. But I’m not blaming you. Just tell me who they are and we’ll call it even.”

July laughed coldly, “Once bitten, twice shy. Do you really think I’ll fall for your words a second time?”

No Smile’s grin no longer looked natural, “I’m being honest this time.”

July shook her head and sighed, “Smiling like this after being killed for four times; you’re really quite the actor.”

No Smile’s expression became rigid, as if July’s words had struck a nerve. No Smile momentarily lost his cool as he menacingly threatened, “If you’re not going to reveal their identity, then I’ll just hold you responsible for everything!”

“Fine! How are you going to do it, then? Drop me by four levels as well?” July smiled broadly.

No Smile felt even more aggrieved. Before he could speak, July already added, “I’m not at level 30 yet. So even if my level drops, it won’t be that great of a loss.”

No Smile’s face blanched. What she said was true. Since the amount of experience points needed to level up after reaching level 30 largely increased, No Smile’s drop from 30 to 29 had lost him a substantial amount of experience points. He was among the top-ranked Thieves on the experience efficiency leaderboard, having accumulated quite a lot of experience points at level 30. Now that his level had fallen from 30 to 26, these four levels alone already accounted for almost half the effort he had placed in this game so far! How could he not feel enraged?

No Smile’s entire being was endlessly devastated. He needed someone to vent his pent-up frustration, so he grinded his teeth and said, “Alright! It’s as you said. We’ll talk after I drop your levels! All four of you! One level each!”

Someone among the onlookers tried to rush toward the confrontation, but was stopped by another beside that person.

“What are you doing?” Gu Fei asked Young Master Han.

Just as July and No Smile were about to verbally cross swords, Luo Luo had already sent a message to Young Master Han. Since Ray’s Bar was near this street, the six had quickly arrived over and squeezed into the crowd to watch the spectacle. Seeing that both

parties were not reaching an agreement and No Smile was about to kill July, Gu Fei rushed to interfere, only to be stopped by Young Master Han.

“Your interference won’t do any good,” Young Master Han told Gu Fei on the mercenary channel, “They have more people here. Going in now would be suicide. What’s the point of doing so?”

“What do you mean?” Gu Fei asked.

“Just like what that lady said; it’s not a big loss for them to die—”

“To hell with that!” Gu Fei shrugged Young Master Han’s hand off him, “This isn’t a zero-sum game,” With that, Gu Fei squeezed his way past the crowd.

No Smile waved his hand and many players of Traversing Four Seas moved to surround July and the three ladies as they awaited the next order to start the massacre.

“I’m giving you one last chance to think this through. Surely, you don’t wish to see your sisters get killed together with you, right?” No Smile asked mockingly, as if he had anticipated everything. July might know him well, but No Smile had an even better understanding of her.

“Go to hell, you low-life!” someone refused his condition before July could even speak. Lie Lie, who had a feisty personality, found No Smile’s actions absolutely deplorable. Using that moment to interject, she quickly slammed her foot forward and executed the level 24 Fighter skill Spurring Meteor, the one she had used on Gu Fei before.

With her speed and damage boosted, she used Spurring Meteor to head straight to No Smile.

“Lie Lie!” July shouted from behind, as Luo Luo hastily bestowed Heal on Lie Lie. When Lie Lie rushed out with her attack, a person beside No Smile also sprinted out with a similar pose and unleashed the same skill.

Since the two Fighters collided with the same skill, only their Strength and Agility stats would decide whose skill would gain priority. Lie Lie's opponent was clearly above her, resulting into her being hit by Spurring Meteor instead. Spurring Meteor had the additional Pierce effect; this caused Lie Lie to be hurled backward, as well as dealt damage to July, Luo Luo and Xiaoyu who had tried to catch her.

No Smile sneered haughtily at their sorry sight. He was about to issue the "kill" order when someone squeezed out among the onlookers and asked, "What's going on? What's with the crowd?"

"What happened? Why did Miles rush in?" Young Master's Elite's group chat erupted, as everyone queried on their private channel.

"Because this isn't a zero-sum game," Young Master Han replied bemusedly, much to the puzzlement of the rest.

"Get ready to fight, everyone. Royal, find a good hiding spot and prepare to Snipe; Sword Demon, activate your Stealth once you've covered your face; Wounds, check how long your Cyclone lasts with your remaining Rage; and Brother Assist, tell us the detail of that Traversing Four Seas' Fighter," Young Master Han rapidly fired off these commands.

"That Fighter is Gale Force. He's one of the four core members of Traversing Four Seas," Brother Assist answered.

"Looks like it's about to become rowdier! Ready yourselves. Assist Miles once he creates an opportunity for us," Young Master Han asked.

"What if no opportunity appears?" Royal God Call questioned.

"Guess we'll just have to go back and keep drinking," Young Master Han shrugged.

Everyone else had no better suggestions.

The haggard Gu Fei, who had finally managed to barge through

the crowd, attracted everyone's attention. July and the three ladies stared at him in shock. Just as Xiaoyu was about to call him, July covered her mouth and shook her head at Xiaoyu. Although Xiaoyu had no idea what was going on, she still obediently shut her mouth.

"What's going on? Why're there so many people here. How am I going to get through?" Gu Fei feigned ignorance as he dramatically looked across to the other side.

"Buddy, please step aside," No Smile said.

"But I want to get over there," Gu Fei pointed to the other end of the road.

"Look for another way. We're currently busy with something over here," No Smile said.

"What is it?" Gu Fei looked on curiously. No Smile did not know how to explain the situation. Should he fill him in on the grudge from years back that had spanned across games? He naturally was not that patient, so No Smile instead asked imposingly, "Have you not heard of our guild, Traversing Four Seas? We're busy with something here, so go take a hike or stay and wait."

"Oh. I guess I'll wait then," Gu Fei stepped back and folded his arms, standing beside No Smile.

Everyone immediately gazed at him once more.

"The show's about to begin!" Sword Demon commented on the mercenary group channel.

"What show?! At most, he'll just cut down No Smile again. How's that going to help in the current situation?" Young Master Han could not see any way out of this.

"Quiet. Miles can see what you're typing on this channel. He might just come up and cut you up instead," Royal God Call said.

"I'm not afraid of him!" Young Master Han said, although his

heart thumped in trepidation. If Gu Fei really wished to send the Flames of Baptism his way, even Young Master Han would not know how to fight back.

No Smile glanced at the stoic Gu Fei standing beside him. He could not help but laughed as he grandly waved his arm once more, “Ignore this guy. Do it!”

“Yes, do it,” Gu Fei raised his hand as well, but his hand suddenly changed direction and went straight toward No Smile’s eyes.

Most people would feel terrified if someone shoved a hand toward their faces. No Smile’s situation was scarier since Gu Fei was poking his fingers to his eyes. A wave of dread came over him and he instinctively lowered his head, raising his arms to cover his face. Gu Fei felt a slight trace of sympathy for him as he grabbed one of No Smile’s wrists and gave it a twist. No Smile’s fingers went lax and the dagger he was holding dropped to the ground. Gu Fei used his free hand to catch the falling weapon, quickly releasing No Smile and retreating at the base of a wall.

Everything happened too fast, and even No Smile only realized that his dagger was gone after five whole seconds. Gu Fei leaned against the wall as he admired No Smile’s dagger in his hand, “Zephyr’s Whisper. That’s some decent Attack you got there! +18 Agility, +10% attack speed – it even comes with the additional usable Thief skill Vanish with a 15-minute cool-down time! This dagger is nice! Let me try....”

“...Oh. It says here ‘Skill unavailable due to incompatible job class.’ So it’s a skill only Thieves can use!” Gu Fei voiced his regret openly.

Young Master Han, who was still within the crowd, had a sudden realization. Back then, No Smile had actually used the skill in that dagger, and almost escaped their first ambush. It was not a skill scroll like they had originally thought. This dagger was extremely valuable since none of the players was at the level to learn Vanish.

When one considered the difficulty of leveling up in Parallel World, the dagger's usefulness and value would definitely last for quite a while.

No Smile could hardly believe how easily Gu Fei stole the high-grade dagger from him.

"Do you want this back? Better tell your men to stop if you do," Gu Fei looked at the sorry state of the ladies who were currently being attacked.

"Stop! Stop! STOP!" No Smile anxiously shouted.

The men immediately stopped and turned toward No Smile in confusion. They had darted forward to fight after hearing No Smile's command, so they did not notice that No Smile's dagger was snatched by the person who had yelled "Do it" together with him.

No Smile's face was as pale as a ghost.

Gu Fei continued to play with the dagger in his hand, looking extremely pleased, "Disperse your men and I'll return this dagger to you immediately."

No Smile hesitated. Would someone really give up such a high-grade weapon once they had obtained it? Although it was hard to believe, he had no other choice. Dropping a player's level would certainly damage his spirit, yet losing equipment was undoubtedly the real incalculable loss. After all, a player's in-game item was the foundation of their gaming spirit.

Chapter 49 - Sharing the same fate

No Smile glanced over at the Fighter called Gale Force, who was one of the four core members of Traversing Four Seas.

Gale Force was supportive of No Smile's 'equipment first' mentality and nodded at him. No Smile raised his hand and said, "Everyone, retreat."

All the players of Traversing Four Seas followed the instruction and retreated. Gu Fei spoke once more, "First, let them go."

No Smile nodded his head vigorously. In his mind, it was far easier to find July and the ladies again than for him to loot a top-grade dagger like Zephyr's Whisper.

"Let's go together," Xiaoyu went over to pull Gu Fei along.

Gu Fei laughed. But before he could reply to her, a shout rang out, "He's not going anywhere!"

Gu Fei nodded and said to the four ladies, "You should all leave first."

The Traversing Four Seas' guild members made way for them. Gu Fei gently pushed Xiaoyu, "Go on!"

The ladies headed into the crowd and made their leave as Xiaoyu glanced back at him from time to time.

"Head straight to the safe zone," Gu Fei fired off a message to her and stood there silently, waiting for a reply.

"They've gotten far enough, right? Now return my dagger to me!" No Smile had seen through Gu Fei's intentions, so he did not hurry him.

Gu Fei chuckled once more, "Can I leave if I return you the dagger?"

"Of course," No Smile replied without thinking.

Gu Fei snickered, “Yeah, that’s gonna be a no for me dawg.”

“You!” No Smile was livid.

“Things won’t end well for you now that you’ve lied to me,” Gu Fei beamed.

No Smile was momentarily stunned before angrily saying, “G*dd*mn it! We’ve got a spy!”

Royal God Call had informed Gu Fei about No Smile’s order on the guild channel to kill off Gu Fei once he got his dagger back. He even bid their members in the Mage Academy to kill Gu Fei to level 0.

Because of this, Gu Fei instantly changed his plan to return Zephyr’s Whisper to No Smile. Gu Fei had always upheld giving someone a dose of his own medicine.

No Smile sang a different tune now that his lie had been exposed. While he was thinking of ways to get back his dagger from Gu Fei, Gale Force already made a decision for him.

“Kill him until he drops Zephyr’s Whisper!” Gale Force yelled, immediately throwing a punch straight out using the skill Spurring Meteor.

Gu Fei unhurriedly lifted his arm and stuck his magic staff straight out, not bothering to dodge. Gale Force was quick, but Gu Fei was quicker. Gu Fei seemingly held the stick in place rigidly as Gale Force ended up crashing straight into it chest-first.

Gu Fei raised his staff for a purpose; he was aiming at the acupuncture point on Gale Force’s torso. Gu Fei’s meager Strength would not make much impact if he were to attack his opponent’s acupuncture point himself. But it was different in this case since Gale Force had propelled himself toward Gu Fei with his Strength. Although Gu Fei’s arm recoiled from the impact, Gale Force still had the wind knocked out of him, with his upper body going numb.

Isaac Newton's third law of motion: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Unfortunately, the average players could not hit with precision like Gu Fei, much less knew where the acupuncture point for the torso lay. Hence, utilizing this physics concept was something impossible for them.

The players of Traversing Four Seas stared in shock as the Mage Gu Fei used his magic staff to disorient Parallel World's sixth-ranked Fighter, leaving Gale Force at a loss of what to do next. No Smile felt anxious about his dagger and did not bother to check on Gale Force's situation as he shouted, "What're you standing there for?! ATTACK!"

At that moment, a melodious voice was heard from above Gu Fei's head, "Stretch your hand out!"

The abodes in Parallel World had no flat roofs but tiled roofs instead. Gu Fei saw a face peeked out from a nearby rooftop, looking as pretty as a flower in bloom against the red tiling. An arm waved up and down from the rooftop as it neared Gu Fei.

Everyone gaped in shock except for Gu Fei. He raised his hand and jumped, clasp on to this person's arm. With a jerk from that arm, Gu Fei instantly stepped on the wall to propel himself further upward, using the momentum to clear the necessary height. The two coordinated well and Gu Fei easily flew up the roof.

"You're pretty strong!" Gu Fei laughed. If this were in reality, this lady would not have been able to pull him up the wall.

"And you're pretty agile yourself," Xi Xiaotian helped Gu Fei up as he had landed half sprawled on the rooftop. Although his clearing of the wall's height had seemed effortless to the many players below, Gu Fei actually put his all into that wall kick to prevent himself from falling down. Hence, his Strength was drained halfway up, resulting into him landing inelegantly on the

rooftop.

“Let’s get out of here!” Xi Xiaotian took the lead and ran off. Gu Fei sneaked a peek below and saw No Smile commanding the Traversing Four Seas’ players to form a human ladder or find items to stack right by the wall, so that they could chase Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian across the rooftops. Young Master Han and the rest, who were still hiding among the crowd, locked eyes with Gu Fei. They had a nonverbal exchange right before Gu Fei ran after the lady.

Gu Fei did not expect Xi Xiaotian to be so familiar with the rooftops’ ‘pathway’. She knew which places could be climbed, were best to descend, and would get one across to the next row of houses. She knew how to travel on these rooftops like the back of her hand, as if she had been doing it for years. She probably used these rooftops to evade capture or to move around the city. The shouts of the Traversing Four Seas’ members quickly faded into the background as Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian got further away from that location. She brought Gu Fei around the rooftops, turning left and right before ending up at Yunduan City’s clock tower. They made it all the way up the tower, which was the highest point in the city.

Up here, Gu Fei could see the Traversing Four Seas’ guild members making their way everywhere on the streets like ants. Gu Fei guffawed at the sight of them.

“How can you still laugh in a situation like this?” Xi Xiaotian asked from behind him.

“What?”

“Traversing Four Seas will surely give you a hard time in the future,” Xi Xiaotian warned.

“Since you’ve helped me, you’ll get into more trouble, right?” Gu Fei asked.

“Me?” Xi Xiaotian shook her head, “I’m not afraid of trouble. Level and such stuff don’t really matter to me. It’s no biggie if I’m to get hunted and killed from time to time. Besides, I’m an expert in dealing with trouble.”

“Of course! Practice makes perfect after all!” Gu Fei agreed sarcastically.

“I’m a professional swindler—”

“Is there such a thing as an amateur swindler?” Gu Fei could not stop laughing.

Xi Xiaotian did not bother to answer that question, as she began to watch the men run crazily all around the city, “As professional swindlers, we have our own set of rules. Within our repertoire of skills, it excludes playing with others’ feelings. We exploit their greedy desires, set the bait, and reel the fish in – that’s our *modus operandi*.”

“When you speak of playing with feelings, do you mean No Smile?”

Xi Xiaotian nodded.

“Not long after July’s Heat was cheated until she quit the game, No Smile got his just desserts from another person. Was it you?” Gu Fei asked.

Xi Xiaotian nodded her head once more.

Gu Fei heaved a long sigh, “Did July ask you to help her?”

Xi Xiaotian shook her head, “No. I didn’t even know her at that time. I did it on my own. Even today, she probably suspects that it was me who did it. I just never see the point of mentioning it.”

“So why did it in the first place?” Gu Fei was perplexed.

Xi Xiaotian was quiet for some time before she finally admitted, “It’s a hobby.”

“Hobby?” Gu Fei felt stunned.

“I enjoy swindling others,” Xi Xiaotian explained, “I see it like an art that interests me.”

“That’s quite a unique hobby,” Gu Fei laughed dryly.

“It’s a pity that my hobby couldn’t be displayed in reality, so I can only enjoy it in online games like this,” Xi Xiaotian lamented.

“What did you say?” Gu Fei, who had always been easygoing, suddenly stared at Xi Xiaotian upon hearing her statement.

“What? You think I should go around cheating people in reality instead?” Xi Xiaotian countered.

“You shouldn’t do it in-game either!”

Xi Xiaotian laughed bitterly, “Do you know the feeling of not being able to display something that you love?”

Gu Fei felt dispirited. How could he not know? But Xi Xiaotian’s swindling hobby harms people, while my kung fu is a cultural inheritance that needs to be improved and showcased. How could they be put on the same pedestal? It’s like comparing apples to oranges, Gu Fei thought of this and unwittingly shook his head.

“What are you shaking your head for?” Xi Xiaotian asked.

“Nothing. I think I slightly understand that feeling you’re talking about – but only slightly! Or at least superficially,” Gu Fei believed that the feeling of being unable to swindle was still different from the feeling of being unable to use kung fu, so he put more emphasis on the word ‘slightly’.

Xi Xiaotian obviously did not believe him, only shaking her head in response.

No matter the case, Gu Fei’s bad impression of Xi Xiaotian changed ever so ‘slightly’ because they now shared this ‘slight’ commonality.

Gu Fei was incessantly thinking of the fact that they were social pariahs, so he started knocking himself in the head repeatedly,

This sort of thinking is dangerous. How can I lower myself to the level of a swindler?

“Alright, I’m off! Anyway, thank you for what you did for me today,” Gu Fei felt it was better to get as far away from this swindler at the earliest. Gu Fei was afraid that he would become influenced by her rotten worldview the longer he stayed. The always self-assured and confident Gu Fei left like he was fleeing from a fight he could not win.

When he descended from the clock tower, he looked back up. Xi Xiaotian was still standing at the same spot and staring down at the city. Gu Fei waved his hand toward her and chose a street to head in. After leaving the range of her rotten thoughts, Gu Fei remembered that he had some things he still needed to do. After finding a corner without anyone around, Gu Fei covered his face with the piece of black cloth, wore his straw hat, took out Flames of Baptism, and put away the magic staff. Gu Fei had decided not to let that flippant and dishonorable person off easily after receiving Royal God Call’s insider information.

Young Master Han and the rest were asking where Gu Fei had went on the mercenary channel. Gu Fei calmly replied with a single message, “Don’t worry about me. Where’s No Smile?”

“Why’re you looking for him?” Young Master Han asked.

“To kill him, of course!” Gu Fei answered simply.

Chapter 50 - A Really Busy Man

No Smile ran through the streets of Yunduan City like a mad man. In a span of one hour, he had dropped by four levels, as well as lost his best weapon. No Smile's present anguish could only be described as the worst a player had felt in Parallel World.

By the time his guild members managed to climb up the rooftop, Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian had long leaped across several rooftops and gotten very far away. No Smile could only shout, "CHASE AFTER THEM!" This was followed by everyone running like headless flies in the general direction. Eventually, many guild members lost their patience running around in circles and gave up; some left Yunduan City to grind levels once more, a few picked up a quest along the way and did that instead, and a portion even ran straight into a safe zone to log off, saying the excuse of having something important to do in reality.

In the end, this was a VRMMO through and through. The guild members thought that there must be benefits to gain first from doing certain things, even if they were running errands for the core members like No Smile. However, these members barely had a taste of these so-called benefits, so they naturally would no longer listen to his orders even with his high position in the guild. Everyone had initially treated this event as a guild activity that they must participate in, so they all willingly helped. But after seeing that their participation did not produce any amount of success, many no longer wanted to waste their time helping No Smile except for his ride-or-die buddies.

No Smile led his buddies through the streets and alleyways in search of Gu Fei, constantly asking everyone on the guild channel for information. At first, there were some who would reply, "No." After a while, even those people became too lazy to bother with him except for a few ill-intentioned 'nice guys'.

"I spotted him by Beck Street! I am onto his trail," Royal God Call

shouted on the private guild channel.

“Watch him well! We’ll be there soon!” No Smile brought his buddies along and frantically ran toward the location, but not long after, Royal God Call shouted once more, “Ah, he turned to a corner and disappeared!” No Smile rushed there for nothing.

No Smile ultimately lost his cool after this had happened for the fourth time, “What the f*ck are you doing?”

Royal God Call bafflingly replied, “Maybe he’s got his eye on me; how else would I keep crossing paths with him?”

No Smile could not even cough up blood when he heard that and could only exchange exasperated looks with his ride-or-die buddies, wanting to cry yet finding he had no tears to spare.

No Smile lifted his head when he had glimpsed a shadow over his head, and saw in time a figure leap off a rooftop with a Chinese broadsword held high. The Chinese broadsword glowed red as it reflected the sun’s rays, somewhat hurting No Smile’s eyes.

The figure wore a tattered straw hat on its head, a piece of black cloth on its face, and a flowing mage robe on its body. No Smile only had the time to shout, “AHHH!”

Gu Fei had landed a blow right on No Smile’s head before he alighted on the ground. He then pirouetted twice on the spot to deliver two slices on No Smile’s body. The Flames of Baptism’s additional fire attack had been procced by the two slices, causing No Smile to disappear under a fiery assault. Gu Fei ran off almost as fast as he arrived.

No Smile’s buddies recovered from their shock after a bit, yelling as they chased after Gu Fei.

No Smile once again found himself back at the Thieves’ Union, blubbering and crying his eyes out to everyone on the guild channel. A majority of the guild members had grown numb to all his complaints by this point in time. Many of them even started to

consider matters thoroughly. Since No Smile had dropped to level 25, he was now among the bottom-ranked players of Traversing Four Seas. In addition, he had lost his top-grade dagger, Zephyr's Whisper. In the early stages of the game, players needed to rely on their level and might instead of connections to reach a well-respected position. Hence, only one thought crossed their minds about No Smile who still foolishly considered himself as a core member of the guild: Pffttt!

Parallel World was a new game after all. This recently established guild had barely any form of unity or camaraderie among its members. In fact, No Smile had only managed to mobilize such a large group of people due to the players' old habit of helping out a fellow guild member who was in trouble. After wasting so much time and effort, this habit could only carry on this far. At the moment, many started to look at the situation pragmatically. Helping the now level 25 No Smile did not seem to be worth that much, so nobody naturally wanted to extend a hand.

Not everyone thought this way, however. The other three core members of the guild felt that the whole incident had tarnished Traversing Four Seas' reputation. It was Yunduan City's number one guild after all. It was in the prime position to sweep Parallel World by storm. With a core member reduced into such a state in just a few hours, would the guild not become a laughingstock in the city instead?

The three could not swallow this bitter pill, but this was only in relation to the guild. As for No Smile, they had only attracted him into the guild because of his high-grade equipment. They actually did not have the chance to build a strong rapport yet.

In the end, the three core members finally came to a decision: They would do something about the situation. Otherwise, others would belittle the strength of Traversing Four Seas.

It was at this point that they received news of No Smile getting killed for the sixth time.

No Smile cried at length in the safe zone. He scolded the guild for being cold-hearted after seeing that not one member reacted to his situation. Suddenly, he received a message from his buddies, saying that they were closely chasing after the masked person. No Smile was elated by this news. He hurriedly dashed out of the safe zone and ran toward the indicated direction, hoping to seal off Gu Fei's path from the other side.

No Smile did manage to block Gu Fei, though not for long. Gu Fei directly strode toward him and executed a high kick, toppling No Smile over until he lay sprawled on the ground. Gu Fei then killed No Smile off with two more stabs from the Flames by Baptism, reducing him into a level 24 player.

After receiving this news, the three core members decided to take action immediately. Traversing Four Seas was basically a guild that they had built from the ground up with their bare hands. Their prestige within the guild was naturally higher than the newly inducted No Smile. It was actually with Fighter Gale Force's call to arms back then that hundreds of guild members had valiantly marched toward Yunxia Valley through Yunliao Farm. What had originally been seen as a simple matter now blew into such disastrous proportion. The three had not even understood the full picture of the matter yet! All they heard was the probability of the one who kept killing No Smile and the one who stole his dagger to be the same person.

Just as the three core members were about to move out, they received a message from Guild Leader July of Amethyst Rebirth, requesting to meet with them to discuss the matter at hand.

"Reflection, go and organize the manpower for No Smile's problem. Gale Force and I will go meet this July," said Oathless Sword, one of the core members and the guild leader of Traversing Four Seas.

Coincidentally, both parties decided to meet at Ray's Bar, as it was the only bar in Yunduan City that offered private rooms. A

private room was needed to discuss such delicate matters with ease after all.

July, Luo Luo, Lie Lie, and Xiaoyu left the safe zone and made their way over. Oathless Sword and Gale Force were just two people. Gale Force had met the four ladies prior to this, and even had the chance to exchange blow with Lie Lie.

“Which one is Guild Leader July?” Oathless Sword asked once he got seated.

“That’s me,” July spoke up, “Please wait a while more. We’ve got a friend who has yet to arrive.”

Gu Fei entered the room just as July finished saying this. He lifted the curtain and said with a huff, “Sorry for being late.” Having to kill people and participate in negotiations all at once, Gu Fei was quite the busy man today.

Just as Gu Fei entered the room, Oathless Sword received word that No Smile had been cut down for the seventh time. He was now at level 23.

Oathless Sword could not be bothered with this news right now as he stared at Gu Fei, “And who might you be?” He had heard that Amethyst Rebirth was an all-female guild, so he was unaware of Gu Fei’s part in all this.

Gale Force quickly gave Oathless Sword a hasty rundown regarding Gu Fei, taking the time to emphasize that he was the person who “had stolen No Smile’s dagger”. Oathless Sword felt deep respect for this man. When all was said and done, snatching a high-grade weapon from a player holding it was a really bold move. Oathless Sword sheathed his sword as he thought of this.

Since this was a negotiation, the four ladies were squeezed together on the left while the two men from Traversing Four Seas were seated on the right. Although Gu Fei belonged to the party on the left, there was not enough space left for him to sit. He was left

with no choice but to sit right in the middle of the two parties at the table's head. Anyone who did not know the situation would assume that Gu Fei was the one who had organized the meeting.

“With regard to what happened today, how much of it does Guild Leader Oathless know?” July spoke first.

“All I know is that our No Smile has been repeatedly killed seven times and his top-grade weapon, Zephyr's Whisper, stolen from him. According to my understanding, this matter originated from you two's conflict in the past,” Oathless Sword said.

“Then, is Guild Leader Oathless aware that Traversing Four Seas intentionally disrupted our guild quest yesterday and killed twelve of my fellow members?” July asked.

“I have no idea!” Oathless Sword felt shocked and he looked at Gale Force.

“No Smile indeed asked on our guild channel for some people's support to PvP yesterday. I asked him why, but he only said that it's a minor issue that could be resolved with a few guild mates. A few idle guild members joined in, but most were his buddies!” Gale Force insisted.

“Guild Leader Oathless now knows the origin of this issue!” July said.

“What does Guild Leader July mean with that?” Oathless Sword asked.

“Nothing really. It's a game; fighting, killing, and PvP happen all the time. Except this time, No Smile and I have a private matter that resulted into this in-game situation. If your guild intends to help No Smile out on this, I will trouble you not to drag my fellow sisters and this guy here into the matter,” July said as she pointed at Gu Fei.

“This... This guy here seems to have taken something No Smile owned, so—” Oathless Sword was about to elaborate further on

this, when Gu Fei unexpectedly brought out the dagger, Zephyr's Whisper, from his dimensional pocket. He tossed it on the table and said, "Here's the item. Take it if you want it."

Everyone was surprised by Gu Fei's move. Although a Mage might not have any use for the dagger, he could have sold the weapon to a Thief who wanted it and he would have definitely made a small fortune. Could he really give up such a delicious morsel like Zephyr's Whisper? After hearing Gale Force's narration of the whole incident, Oathless Sword had thought that this man would be bold and gutsy. But as it stood right now, that might not be the case! Had he gotten cold feet even before the negotiations even started?

Oathless Sword suppressed the rumbling laughter growing in his stomach as Gu Fei stood up, "Take that dagger back. As for No Smile, I heard he's still being hunted! Looks like no one can save him now. Bro, I don't think No Smile is someone worthy of your effort. Just tell No Smile that the condition for taking back Zephyr's Whisper is his resignation from the guild; his choice afterward should speak volumes about his character. I've got something else on, so I'll take my leave. Take your time and negotiate!"

Gu Fei spoke his piece and left the room. He took a turn, walked past three more rooms, and went into another room that he was more familiar with.

"Where's the water I requested? Quickly give it to me. I'm pooped," Gu Fei hurriedly said as he entered the room.

Young Master Han pushed a glass of water toward him.

Gu Fei lifted the glass and downed it in record time, as Royal God Call said, "No Smile sure left the safe zone in a hurry. He's now leading a few friends, while crying and cursing on the guild channel!"

"F*ck me! Why didn't you say so sooner?!" Gu Fei put the glass

down on the table and sprinted out of the room.

“Looks like No Smile really won’t be able to smile any longer...”
Young Master Han murmured.

Chapter 51 - Power of the Fans

Gu Fei left Ray's Bar and immediately headed toward the Thieves' Union. He did not bother searching specifically for No Smile. Since No Smile's situation had become well-known all over Yunduan City, many people would now gather wherever he was at.

Almost every player within the city had heard about the relentless hunter who was after No Smile's life. According to the rumors, this hunter had dropped No Smile's level from 30 to 23 in just an hour, and that he was still after No Smile even now. Because of this, the hunter, now dubbed by the public as the Masked Slayer, had attained a legendary status among the players. Many of these players wanted to witness the hunter's epic pursuit, and the most effective way to do so for them was to follow his victim, No Smile. Thankfully, Parallel World did not have a general or trade channel that players could access like in other MMORPGs; otherwise, a number of players would surely or even gladly 'betray' No Smile's location to the Masked Slayer just to see him in action.

As Gu Fei neared the Thieves' Union, he saw that a dense crowd had gathered in its vicinity. He squeezed through this mass of people to take a look at what they were flocking together for, and spotted No Smile and his ride-or-die buddies walking to and fro the street. A large number of players were trailing behind them dozens of meters away. Gu Fei was in a crowd that must have taken a detour to spectate from the other end of the street, as even the rooftops lining this very lane had quite a few people on them.

No Smile was of course unhappy to be followed by the onlookers, yet he could only bear with it grudgingly. There were simply too many onlookers following him, and cursing at them would only result in him dropping a level at their hands instead of the Masked Slayer.

Gu Fei smiled faintly.

“Sorry! Excuse me...” Gu Fei apologized repeatedly as he stepped away from the crowd. He found himself a building and got onto its rooftop. Gu Fei stealthily changed into his ‘Masked Slayer’ getup behind the other players who were on the rooftop as well. He then stood on tiptoe to see over the onlookers’ shoulders the exact position of No Smile.

“Bro, let me through,” Gu Fei patted the man in front of him.

The person impatiently turned around, but his eyes shone brightly upon seeing Gu Fei. Gu Fei quickly signaled the man to be quiet. The man nodded his head vigorously and pressed his two hands firmly over his mouth, while tapping the guy next to him with his elbow.

“What?!” The guy turned around after being tapped, and his eyes shone equally brightly when he saw Gu Fei, prompting Gu Fei to signal the person to be quiet as well. The two onlookers were now nodding their heads vigorously and covering their mouths with their hands, as they tapped the next guy....

In no time at all, a whole bunch of players wore a star-struck look on their faces and held their hands against their mouths, as they cleared a path for Gu Fei. As Gu Fei slowly made his way through, the players across the street spotted him as well. Their eyes also shone brightly, and Gu Fei had to signal them to be quiet as well....

Why was it suddenly so quiet? No Smile found it odd that the large crowd’s hubbub of excited conversations, which had pervaded the air a minute ago, abruptly turned into hushed talks. In fact, it was now so quiet that he could hear the disturbance in the air right above his head. No Smile quickly raised his head, just in time to see a flash of reddish light descending upon him. The glow made No Smile turn pale and he quickly found himself fleeing away from the group that had surrounded him.

No Smile’s buddies were nearly driven mad at this point. They had followed No Smile all this while and were taking precautions

upon precautions. Seeing that a huge crowd had gathered around them, they were confident that if that person attempted to kill No Smile, they would be aware of it. And yet, they had not expected the mob of players to side with the killer, allowing him to apathetically murder No Smile in broad daylight! His buddies felt extremely aggrieved, yet they still failed to channel their anger into strength. Gu Fei once again escaped their pursuit easily with the help of the crowd that had conveniently prepared a path of escape for him.

After a short while, Gu Fei found out that the crowd's pursuit was much harder to escape, as quite a few of them were capable of running abreast of him. All of them were curious about the Masked Slayer's identity; they thought that it would be easier to find this out, as well as to witness his killing, if they trailed after him instead of No Smile.

Gu Fei fully understood how terrifying the power of fans was for the first time in his life.

At this rate, No Smile's ride-or-die buddies only had to follow the mob and they would find Gu Fei as well. Feeling exasperated, he could only keep running like his life depended on it. After countless detours around Yunduan City, Gu Fei was still unable to ditch his entourage completely, as more people meant more fan power. There were instances when Gu Fei had managed to shake the pursuing players off, only to bump into them again at the next street.

This cycle of losing and stumbling upon the same players signified that the fans were aware of his whereabouts. But all the effort he had placed into running away bore fruit when he accidentally ran into No Smile while weaving through the streets of Yunduan City. He unhesitatingly killed off No Smile with his Chinese broadsword once more.

When No Smile faded into a beam of white light in front of him, Gu Fei vaguely registered something dropping onto the ground.

The players behind him exclaimed in unison, “His equipment dropped!” But Gu Fei did not even bother to look at it. All were momentarily stunned, before they crazily dove toward the item that No Smile had dropped. Finding out the killer’s identity was nothing compared to acquiring high-grade equipment!

This was how Gu Fei fortuitously escaped from this bunch of fanatics. He immediately got into a secluded street, quickly took off his disguise, and finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Meanwhile, July and Oathless Sword were still busy negotiating at Ray’s Bar. Oathless Sword had received two separate notifications about No Smile getting killed during the negotiation. Oathless Sword felt quite disturbed when he did a quick mental calculation and realized that No Smile was now at level 21. Although he was worried about his guild’s reputation being tarnished by No Smile’s repeated deaths, he was more terrified of the killer’s might.

No Smile might have turned pathetic now, but he was still an uncompromisingly capable man. That was why Oathless Sword had originally gotten No Smile to join Traversing Four Seas, even designating him as a core member.

For No Smile to not even stand a fighting chance against his killer, how would Oathless Sword fare if they traded places? Oathless Sword suddenly felt a chill come over him. Although he was the leader of a guild with three hundred members in Yunduan City, it did not mean he could bring all of them whenever he grinded for levels outside. This killer, who came and left like the wind, was someone capable of dropping No Smile’s level nine times; simply thinking about this fact brought chill up and down Oathless Sword’s spine.

The fact that just one person was causing all this havoc made the matter worse. No Smile’s report earlier mentioned that his party had been wiped out by six people. If all six of them were to act together, there would be no telling how frightening it could get.

The negotiation tilted out of his favor as he became faint-hearted. Was there a need to expend so much energy for a level 21 player? Their lost reputation was irrecoverable after No Smile got reduced by nine levels. Besides, those people's main target had always been No Smile alone. If the guild rallied and officially supported No Smile in this, would they shift their targets to the other players in the guild?

Oathless Sword now deeply experienced the pain of being on the receiving end of animosity. After weighing the pros and cons of the matter, he finally came to a decision and heaved a long sigh, "Guild Leader July, we have decided to expel No Smile from the guild. The matter between you two, Traversing Four Seas will not have any part. What do you think of this?"

"Oathless!" The first one to be shocked by Oathless Sword's decision was Gale Force.

Oathless Sword looked at him but could not find the right words to explain his decision.

July and the other ladies were astonished by his decision as well. They had not expected Oathless Sword to make such a large concession to them. No Smile's expulsion from the guild meant that they were officially and figuratively washing their hands off the whole July and No Smile's business. It was equivalent to saying that Traversing Four Seas would stay out of this problem for good.

"Guild Leader Oathless sure has a great insight about the matter at hand. How admirable," Luo Luo gave a very refined compliment.

July was still somewhat dumbfounded. She had barely presented a solid argument in this negotiation, yet Oathless Sword decisively compromised in her favor! While this was all going through July's head, Oathless Sword and Gale Force stood up, "We're leaving then. This dagger... We'll be taking it to at least give No Smile some form of explanation."

July nodded her head.

Oathless Sword took Zephyr's Whisper and left Ray's Bar with Gale Force.

"Why?" Gale Force asked once they had left the establishment.

"Our opponent is far too strong! While we were negotiating, No Smile was killed twice," Oathless Sword said.

"And you are afraid?"

"Not just for me but for all of us in the guild. If they actually targeted any of us, do you think we would stand a chance?" Oathless Sword said.

"I'm not scared of them! I'll take them all on!"

"You may not be afraid, but what about the other guild members? How can our guild survive if all are on their toes and have no way of resolving the issue?"

Gale Force was speechless.

"Let's go! We'll return Zephyr's Whisper to No Smile to at least account for our decision," Oathless Sword said.

"Just who are these people?!" Gale Force clenched his fists in anger. It was a truly bitter pill to swallow.

"Remember this day! After all, revenge is a dish best served cold!"

Gale Force nodded his head even though he was still enraged.

In Ray's Bar, July and the ladies were very excited with the new development to their problem.

"Without the support of the largest guild in Yunduan City and his low level, I don't think we need to be afraid of him any longer," July said reassuringly.

"That killer sure is fantastic!" Lie Lie was star-struck, "Sis Luo Luo, just who is he?!"

“I don’t know either,” Luo Luo shook her head, “Besides the mercenary group leader himself, he did not reveal any information about his comrades to me. Right now, rumors are saying that the person is a Mage. From what I know, he’s a Mage that soloed the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto!”

“That’s too overpowered....”

“Luo Luo, get in contact with him. Try and see if you can set up a meeting so that we can thank him personally,” July said.

“What are we thanking him with? Our bodies, perhaps?” Luo Luo snickered.

“What nonsense,” July chided her softly.

Xiaoyu cheered all of a sudden, leaping up in celebration.

“What’s the matter, Xiaoyu?” The three ladies were taken aback by her sudden movement.

“Can I go and do quests now?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Go ahead! But you still need to be careful,” July said.

“Nothing to worry about! No Smile won’t be able to do anything to her; he’s too busy being hunted right now!” Luo Luo proclaimed.

“Sis Luo Luo, you are here with us all this while! How come you know so much about what’s happening outside?” Lie Lie was puzzled.

“I’m privately messaging their mercenary leader right now. He’s keeping me updated,” Luo Luo explained.

Three rooms away from the four ladies was another room. Inside, everyone was criticizing Young Master Han, “Come on, drink up! Why are you just sitting there in a daze?!”

“Shut up!” Young Master Han snapped, “I’m discussing business with the employer! This has been a tough mission, so of course I’m milking them for what it’s worth!”

“Okay, go for it!” the four men readily agreed.

“Does this mean that Miles is going take the majority of the portion again?” Brother Assist asked carefully.

Sword Demon nodded, “It’s only fair!”

Everyone was in the dumps. “We’re just a bunch of laborers!” Royal God Call groaned, “Miles, I hate you!”

“Achoo!” Gu Fei sneezed, just as he finished off No Smile for the tenth time.

“Man, today’s been exhausting,” Gu Fei mumbled to himself, but he was not done yet....

“The Masked Slayer is getting away!” a scream echoed as a throng of players ran toward him, nearing him with every step.

Chapter 52 - Celebration

No Smile felt utterly dejected now that he had dropped to level 20. He stood listlessly inside the Thieves' Union, not making any movement. All the players nearby were gesticulating at him.

“You see that guy? He's originally the eleventh-ranked Thief on the leaderboard, but now he's only a level 20 player. Tsk tsk!”

“G*dd*mn it! What is he standing there in a daze for? Get out of the safe zone already; I still want to see the Masked Slayer in action!”

“Ha ha ha ha ha! I've seen him twice!”

“I've chased after him for five streets!”

“Why is he still not leaving the Thieves' Union? I can't wait any longer!”

All the players were anxious, hoping that No Smile would just leave the safe zone and dive head-first into the arms of death like he had done ten times before. Had it not been for the no-physical-contact rule in the safe zones, the situation “tossing someone out of the safe zone to be killed” that Gu Fei had previously described would have already happened to No Smile.

The players nearby waited for the Masked Slayer, but instead saw Oathless Sword and Gale Force arrive. Just like No Smile, the two were core members of Traversing Four Seas. But those players in the know were well aware that Traversing Four Seas was actually mobilized by Oathless Sword, Gale Force, and another player called Youthful Reflection. No Smile was actually a late addition to the core.

Oathless Sword and Gale Force did not say a word upon seeing the large crowd of nosey onlookers, and they just walked up straight to No Smile within the safe zone.

“No Smile,” Oathless Sword addressed him firmly.

No Smile lifted his head with a blank look on his face.

“I’ve spoken with the people from Amethyst Rebirth,” Oathless Sword began to say.

No Smile listened wordlessly.

“They have agreed to return you the dagger, Zephyr’s Whisper, but under the condition that you leave Traversing Four Seas,” Oathless Sword stared at No Smile intensely, “What do you think?”

No Smile’s lifeless eyes seemed to spark with life once more, “That’s easy. I’ll leave the guild. Just add me back in once I have the dagger.”

Oathless Sword’s eyes quickly flashed with disbelief. No Smile was truly a rotten man. To come up with such a cunning scheme in a moment’s notice without batting an eye, his crooked nature was made crystal clear!

Oathless Sword suddenly realized that kicking this sort of person from the guild would actually be beneficial in the long run. It would be hard to accomplish anything if one of the core members had such a terrible personality. With such a thought in mind, Oathless Sword took out Zephyr’s Whisper and tossed it to No Smile.

“It’s settled, then!” Oathless Sword said with finality and turned to leave with Gale Force.

“What do you mean?” No Smile was stunned.

No Smile got his answer almost instantly.

[System notification: Due to repeated breach of guild rules, Player No Smile has been expelled from Traversing Four Seas. We hope the rest of the guild members would heed this as a warning.]

“Oathless, what’s the meaning of this?!” No Smile yelled in anger. Whenever people got angry, they would often throw or

damage things to vent their frustration. No Smile raised his hand to do just that. But when he remembered that he was holding Zephyr's Whisper, he immediately lowered his hand and put the weapon into his dimensional pocket instead.

“F*CK!” No Smile roared.

“D*mn. So close...” the crowd around him muttered in regret. Everyone had been looking forward to No Smile mistakenly tossing the dagger while he was in an emotional state!

Gu Fei was actually among the crowd, raring for a fight with No Smile who had been staying in the safe zone for quite some time. Since No Smile got his precious dagger back, he would be elated enough to take it out for a spin, right?

In the end, No Smile kept the dagger and logged off.

“Awww...” the onlookers once more exhaled with scorn. They all decided to take their leave now that the exciting event was as good as over. Gu Fei was staring dejectedly at the leaving mass of people when he suddenly received a message from July, “What are you doing right now? Return to the guild!”

Since Gu Fei had nothing else to do now that No Smile had gone offline, he decided to just head over to Amethyst Rebirth's headquarters. When Gu Fei turned up outside the guild house, he saw that many of the ladies were already gathered inside. Realizing that he was the last to arrive, he quickly stepped inside, just in time to hear July happily announced, “No Smile has been kicked out from Traversing Four Seas.”

Gu Fei positioned himself by a corner and faintly smiled, watching all the ladies cheered. His heart was filled with a sense of accomplishment.

“Sis Luo Luo, it's all thanks to you for finding that mercenary group! They are so strong! Just who are they?” many of the ladies asked curiously.

Luo Luo answered regretfully, “I’ve only met the group’s leader, so I don’t know who the rest of them are. Even when they were staging a sneak attack, their faces remained covered. It’s most likely done to fully conceal their identities.”

July nodded, “I originally wanted to thank them all in person as well, especially that Mage of theirs. But I think it would be best if we don’t make things difficult for them right now.”

The ladies were extremely disappointed, especially Lie Lie whose face was filled with regret, “I really want to know who that Mage is!”

Gu Fei listened to them silently, maintaining a smile on his face.

Although the ladies did not know what Gu Fei had done for them behind their backs, they were at least aware of what he had done in public a while ago. July clapped her hands to get the attention of everyone in the room as she spoke, “Besides Luo Luo who found the mercenary group, we should thank Miles regarding this matter as well. It’s due to him stealing No Smile’s top-grade dagger that we managed to get out of that sticky situation, as well as gave us a powerful leverage to negotiate terms with Traversing Four Seas.”

The ladies’ response was not so keen this time. The lukewarm reaction was not due to them holding Gu Fei in low regard, but rather because most of them had treated him coldly before. Even though he had just done them a huge favor, it would have been far too unnatural for them to suddenly approach him with great ardor. The ladies were quite a prideful bunch after all, so they were somewhat reluctant to do a one-eighty on their attitude toward Gu Fei. Thus, they were somewhat confused as to how they should thank him now.

Some items were considered ‘top grade’, so some people could naturally be considered as ‘top grade’ as well.

Lie Lie, who had always been biased toward Gu Fei, graciously changed her attitude toward him. She approached him and

courteously said, "I couldn't tell before, but you ain't half bad!"

Gu Fei's face was still plastered with the same smile, as he placidly accepted her compliment by saying, "Thanks."

Seeing Gu Fei's almost emotionless response, Lie Lie stalked away sheepishly.

July felt the awkward atmosphere as well, so she quickly announced, "Alright. Now that this problem is resolved, let's be at ease and continue enjoying the game!"

Everyone applauded, and huddled together once more to gab about that legendary Masked Slayer.

"Thank you!" July walked toward Gu Fei at this moment and earnestly thanked him.

"Ah, it's nothing. I may be a temporary member, but I'm still a part of your guild right now. It's only natural that we should help one another in times of trouble," Gu Fei smiled.

July was tongue-tied. The girls in the guild had never considered Gu Fei as one of them, and Gu Fei had never acted as if he was a part of them either. Yet in such dire straits, this temporary member had actually contributed the most out of everyone in the guild.

"Don't mind how the girls treat you! They are just... Uhm..." July could not find the proper word to describe the present situation.

"Don't worry about it," Gu Fei said, "If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave. Is that alright?"

"Mmhmm. Go ahead!" July said.

Gu Fei turned and was about to exit the guild house when July suddenly stopped him.

"Yes?" Gu Fei turned his head.

"Uhm, where's your straw hat? Weren't you always wearing one?" July questioned him.

Gu Fei's heart skipped a beat, before he quickly replied, "Heh, I was a noob back then, and was unaware that we can't simply equip whatever we want. A Mage like me isn't supposed to wear a straw hat, so I threw it away."

"Oh...."

"I'm off," Gu Fei waved goodbye as he exited the guild house.

"What? Are you thinking that Miles is that Masked Slayer?" Luo Luo went over to July's side once Gu Fei had left.

"I heard that the Masked Slayer wears a straw hat, a beginner mage robe, and is at level 30. Isn't that too similar to how Miles used to dress?" July said.

"True. Plus, Miles and that guy like using swords. When Miles fought with Xiaoyu, he wielded a sword as well," Luo Luo commented.

"But..." Luo Luo immediately added, "Miles couldn't beat Xiaoyu. Without my assistance, he would have died back then."

"Did he purposely lose to Xiaoyu?" July asked.

"I couldn't tell," Luo Luo answered.

"If he couldn't even beat Xiaoyu, while the Masked Slayer could effortlessly kill No Smile... They couldn't possibly be the same person," July surmised.

"Who knows? Maybe, the Masked Slayer saw Miles' comical outfit and decided to purposely disguise himself like that to better hide his identity!" Luo Luo suggested.

"He's got quite the sense of humor, then," July laughed.

"But still, there's a possibility of Miles being the Masked Slayer," Luo Luo said carefully.

"True. I guess we'll just find out in the future..." July said.

Gu Fei became aware of this problem as well upon leaving the

Amethyst Rebirth's guild house. Due to his very unique equipment choices, July, Luo Luo, and the rest of those who had met him before could connect the Masked Slayer's identity to him. This would make things seriously annoying for Gu Fei! He should seek Young Master Han and the rest of the gang's advice regarding this. As he was pondering on this, Young Master Han sent him a message, "How're you doing, Mr. Slayer?"

"No Smile went offline," Gu Fei replied.

"You should take a break after ten kills as well! Come back to the bar. There's something important we've got to do," Young Master Han said.

"What's that?" Gu Fei asked.

"Splitting the reward," Young Master Han answered.

"Oh! I'll be there right away," Gu Fei quickly said.

The five were seated together awaiting Gu Fei inside Ray's Bar. There were ten coin pouches stacked on the table shaped like a little mountain.

"Open them and pour everything out!" Royal God Call's voice trembled slightly, "1000 gold coins! I want to see them piled together! It must be quite the sight!"

"Pathetic!" The other four men criticized him as they salivated.

"How much did we earn last mission?" Royal God Call asked.

"210 gold coins. Miles took 60, and we all took 30 each," Young Master Han said.

"There's actually so much this time... The ladies of Amethyst Rebirth sure are rich!" Royal God Call remarked.

"So how are we splitting it this time?" Brother Assist asked.

"Hmm... Miles put in a lot of effort this time. He'll take half and we'll split the remaining equally; what do you all think?" Young Master Han asked.

“Sounds about right,” Sword Demon nodded his head.

“Half is about 500 gold coins,” Royal God Call felt hollow inside as he said this.

“100 gold coins each isn’t too bad. You should be thankful as it is!” War Without Wounds said, “I can finally buy myself a better weapon.”

Brother Assist swept the room, “Among us right now, only Sword Demon’s Frost Memories and Royal’s Great Lunar Bow could be considered as top-grade items!”

“My bow isn’t top grade; its Attack Power is just slightly better than the average bow. Sword Demon’s dagger is the real deal, though. 30% chance of a fatal blow! If my bow had that trait, I would become an unrivaled existence!” Royal God Call proclaimed.

“You may want to lower your voice. The King of Slayers is right behind you,” War Without Wounds warned as he patted Royal God Call.

Royal God Call turned around and saw Gu Fei standing right behind him.

Chapter 53 - Slayer!

“Ah! Mr. King of Slayers, you’re back! Please have a seat!” Royal God Call jumped up and offered his seat to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei ruffled his hair and laughed, “That’s a good boy.”

“Oh! That’s quite the pile of coins you’ve got there!” As Gu Fei sat down, he finally noticed the pouches filled with in-game currency on the table.

“How do you think we should split these, Miles?” Young Master Han asked nonchalantly, yet the glint in his eyes betrayed his ulterior motive. All were relatively acquainted with one another by now. Everyone had felt awkward about Gu Fei’s acquiescence to split evenly the reward for the last mission. Right now, however, they had no such qualms and would wholeheartedly accept it if Gu Fei suggested the same thing again. No one sitting in this room was a pushover – well, except for Sword Demon who occasionally displayed naiveté. Very aware of this fact, Young Master Han had been attempting to signal Sword Demon with his eyes of his intentions, yet Sword Demon neither showed any sign of comprehension nor even spoke a word.

“Oh? What do I think?” Under everyone’s gaze, Gu Fei started to count with his raised fingers, “Our target was No Smile, whom we killed ten times. I killed him eight out of those ten times, and Sword Demon killed him twice. I suppose I should get eight out of the ten money pouches, while Sword Demon should get the last two!”

“Mmmhmm, not bad. I support this!” Sword Demon nodded sagely.

“Support your mom’s head!” Young Master Han spat.

“Using eye contact to conspire is so passé,” Gu Fei mocked Young Master Han, “We used private chat instead.”

“F*ck! You b*st*rds!” Young Master Han continued to curse at them.

“Alright, calm down. Let’s just split these coins evenly. We’ve all had a long day,” Gu Fei said generously.

“That’s what I’m talking about!” Royal God Call pounced like a hungry tiger on its prey, snatching away two pouches of gold coins. The others followed suit as well. Gu Fei felt a great sense of accomplishment once more, as well as astounded by July and the ladies’ affluence to afford such a large payout.

Considering the amount of [RMB](#) that players had to pay when purchasing goods at the Trade Exchange and the sum that they could earn from the items sold at the Auction House, the price for a single in-game gold coin was about 10 RMB. Since the game was still in the early stages, the amount of gold coins available on the market was relatively low.

It was not easy for pay-to-win players to save up on gold coins either. This was because players would usually sell high-grade equipment at the Trade Exchange. Therefore, players who bought these pieces of equipment with real-world currency would still have a hard time trading them for in-game gold coins due to their high prices.

Reaching 1000 gold coins in savings on such economic market conditions could already be considered as impressive. To do so, players would have to use real-world currency to purchase lower-grade items that others could afford and slowly sell those cheap items in exchange for the in-game gold coins; hence, an awful lot of perseverance was needed to accomplish all the necessary trades.

By the time Gu Fei’s thoughts returned to the present, not one money pouch could be seen on the table.

“Hey, where’s my share?!” Gu Fei slapped his hand on the table.

“That’s weird. Where is it?” someone said.

Brother Assist, the self-proclaimed Information Expert, quipped, “There’re six of us here, and there’re only ten coin pouches—”

“Pour all out and split them evenly!” Gu Fei demanded.

“You can’t completely divide one thousand by six!” Everyone showed an awkward expression. Gu Fei was just about to act when Young Master Han suddenly said, “Nope, everything’s split correctly.”

“Are you kidding me?! How did I end up with not a coin, then?!” Gu Fei demanded.

“Have you forgotten?” Young Master Han unhurriedly explained, “You spent 200 gold coins here drinking last night, which is coincidentally your share of today’s payout. I’ve already footed the bill for you.”

“200 gold coins? Miles, what the heck did you drink?” everyone asked in surprise.

“That’s not right! Brother Assist and I drank four glasses of liquor yesterday. The cost should only be—eh? Where did Brother Assist go?” Gu Fei looked around for him.

“This matter must be settled properly. I’ll go bring him back!” War Without Wounds stood up and left.

Yet nobody returned in the end. Royal God Call slapped his thigh and said, “Ahhhh! Those two sly foxes must have planned this from the beginning! I’ll go and drag them back!”

When Royal God Call exited the room, Young Master Han got up as well, “You guys are far too churlish! Get back here immediately!” He stepped toward the door and was about to leave when a sudden wave of heat seared near his face. Young Master Han immediately dodged backward and saw Gu Fei’s Flames of Baptism blocking the doorway.

“Nice sword!” Young Master Han chuckled.

“Today, I killed No Smile eight times,” Gu Fei stared at his Chinese broadsword and said, “Using NBA terms, not only am I heating up, I’m practically at my peak condition.”

“I don’t believe you would dare kill me,” Young Master Han said nervously.

“Of course, I wouldn’t. But don’t expect to leave today without handing over my portion!” Gu Fei said.

“Fine!” Young Master Han sat back down, “I’m not going anywhere. Do you think my nickname, Drinking Addict, is just for show? Ray, bring me a round!”

“The most expensive one! It’s on Young Master Han’s tab!” Gu Fei added.

“Come at me! Get me two bottles!” Young Master Han hollered.

Ray swiftly swooped by with two bottles of liquor. It was not often that he could get this sort of business.

Two bottles totaled to 240 gold coins at 120 gold coins each. Young Master Han tossed the money pouches and laughed uproariously, “Now I’m poor as well. Let’s see you do something about that! Ha ha ha ha ha! Come, let us go head-to-head without backing down! We’re both paupers now!”

Gu Fei smiled faintly, and reached out swiftly with his hands. The two bottles of liquor, which had just been served on the table, were now tucked close to his chest.

“What are you doing? Take them all for yourself? That’s far too dishonest!” Young Master Han said.

Gu Fei flashed a beaming smile. Ray had already collected the payment and was about to leave when Gu Fei’s hand stretched out to hold him back, “Hey, Ray. How about I sell you these two bottles for 200 gold coins?”

Ray was stunned, and so was Young Master Han.

“Won’t you make such a lucrative deal?” Gu Fei said as he flashed Ray his pearly whites.

Ray smiled back as he dropped two money pouches on the table. Gu Fei deftly caught them and placed the two bottles into Ray’s arms.

“I’m off!” Gu Fei saluted Young Master Han and fled at top speed.

“F*ck! F*ck! F*ck!” Young Master Han cried in anguish, as if he had just awoken from a nightmare. Players outside the room heard his moaning and asked, “Hey, Ray. When did your bar start providing sexual services?”

“Forget about it!” Sword Demon consoled Young Master Han, “Let me buy you a round.”

“That’s my pal!” Young Master Han patted Sword Demon on his shoulder, “Ray, get me your most—”

“Nope! Not the most expensive one!” Sword Demon stabbed his dagger on the table as he slowly said, “Two bottles cost 240 gold coins. I don’t have that much.”

“Get us two bottles of your second most expensive liquor instead!” Sword Demon shouted.

At night, Young Master Han, the legendary Drinking Addict, was alternating between weeping and drinking, as he lamented, “He’s a real slayer, alright!”

Gu Fei went back to grinding levels after leaving the bar. Just like before, his rhythm was heavily affected by the Flames of Baptism’s uncontrollable fire attack proc rate. Since the monsters were different from the people who had been ordered to capture him alive back then, he experienced many close encounters whenever the monsters mobbed him.

Gu Fei only had to change weapon to resolve this issue, yet he did not do so. For him, this was another chance to hone his kung fu further. He did not possess a well-trained body in the game like in

reality. Gu Fei's reaction speed, Strength, and other factors were purely decided by the game's algorithm, so his training in Parallel World largely focused on the mind.

For instance, what was the ideal course of action when dealing with different fighting scenarios? Should he counter or dodge? If he countered, which opponent should he target? If he dodged, which direction should he go? All of these required Gu Fei to determine the correct path to take in a split second. When provided with a myriad of possibilities, how would he choose the best course of action? Some people would say that it depended on instinct. Although this answer was correct, it was only partly. This was because there were actually two kinds of instinct: innate and acquired.

In any case, Gu Fei would never dare consider himself as a consummate genius. A situation like this was hard to come by in reality as well, so the least he could do was to accumulate all these experiences diligently.

“Eyes on the hands, hands on the eyes.”

The word ‘eyes’ actually referred to instantly perceiving, judging, and deciding the best course of action in a fight. This aspect could be trained in reality and in the game, yet Gu Fei never had many opportunities to experience actual combat in real life.

As for the ‘hands’ aspect, Gu Fei could only continue honing his body in reality. All was truly simpler in games, as everything depended on stat points and equipment.

Gu Fei's efficiency at killing monsters had dropped right now, so a slight negligence on his part could lead to his death. If this were another player, he or she would most likely stop grinding under such harsh conditions.

But Gu Fei was different. His reason for entering this VRMMO varied from the average gamer after all. For Gu Fei, the value of having high-intensity mental training was greater than leveling

faster and acquiring more stat points.

The damage Gu Fei could deal right now was too unbalanced. Thankfully, his past monotonous fighting tempo was adapting little by little to Flames of Baptism's 30% fire attack proc rate, making his fighting seem more alive, fluid, and unpredictable.

Naturally, such evaluation was just from Gu Fei's perspective. Instead of continuing to dance with death like Gu Fei, any regular player would have simply chosen to fight the monsters one by one or changed equipment.

Gu Fei grinded like this for an hour or so before ending today's gaming session.

The legend that he had created lived on, however.

By the time Gu Fei ended his hunt of No Smile, the matter had already made its way to the game forums. Everything had been put onto the forums from the start of his hunt to his last kill. Everyone animatedly discussed the Masked Slayer's way of hunting his victim and ability to drop his target's level by ten in just a few hours. Many formed different opinions.

Those fervent PvP fanatics naturally approved of Gu Fei's actions; their judgment could be summarized into a word: COOL!

As for those worrywarts, they felt immense anxiety about this event. They saw the Masked Slayer as a terrorist that fostered violence, treating the entire game as a PvP field! They were distressing about matters that did not need distressing, such as how the event would cause the game company's turnover rate to drop.

Of course, a majority of the players were simply joining in on the fun and never truly thought deeply about it. All they knew was that today's hunt only ended after No Smile had gone offline. Thus, they were waiting with bated breath for the hunt to resume tomorrow.

At any rate, the players were very clear about two facts.

First, the Masked Slayer was immensely formidable. Rumors said that he was a Mage who had used close-combat techniques to kill a Thief – a legendary achievement, indeed.

Second, No Smile was really stupid. Everyone knew that No Smile was being hunted and that he was no match for the killer. But rather than hid offline, he had stubbornly faced the Masked Slayer, causing him to lose ten levels – truly the epitome of stupidity.

RMB - is short for Ren Min Bi (人民币), the official currency of China.

Chapter 54 - The Trouble that PvP Brings

Gu Fei was immediately assailed by fatigue after going offline. A regular player would never consider Gu Fei's daily gaming schedule as tiresome, so it could be said that his time online today had been very fruitful.

The nonstop hunting of No Smile and the Flames of Baptism's demand for utmost concentration had mentally drained Gu Fei by several folds. He felt spent once he had slightly eased his nerves after leaving the game. It's truly tough to be an online gaming pro! Gu Fei thought of Sword Demon and the rest who spent most of their time playing the game, regardless of whether it was day or night. Their bodies could not compare to Gu Fei's since they were all nerds, yet their ability to focus on the game for a whole day was admirably beyond him.

Gu Fei did not rush to get online today after a full night's rest. Instead, he casually browsed the game's official forums.

He might be an undeniable combat expert in-game, yet his online gaming knowledge was amateurish at best.

Flames of Baptism effectively boosted his Attack Power, as well as provided him with an interesting training material, yet its additional fire attack's erraticity had posed quite a danger to Gu Fei. Hence, he was now searching for a method to raise the trait's proc rate by 100%. If Gu Fei could do that, he would surely become a consistent, high-attack fighter.

Unfortunately, Parallel World's players were currently more focused on researching about the traits concerning the status effects, such as the Slow effect of Ice Damage, Paralysis effect of Electric Damage, and so on. Not much attention was given on researching a trait that could only cause fire attack. As for equipment traits that dealt additional magic attack, the consensus was for players to choose Poison Damage instead of Fire Damage.

This was due to the lack of stats that would affect magic for close combat job classes. Poison Damage was dependent on the equipment itself instead of a character's magic affinity, and it had the additional advantage of reducing the target's HP even after completing the attack. Moreover, a decent weapon with Poison Damage could easily exceed the potential of a weapon with fire attack.

There was also another important reason: A weapon's additional magic attack trait could only be activated through normal attacks. Conversely speaking, the additional magic attack on weapons would not proc when a player incorporated skills into his or her attack. While this might not matter during a normal monster grind, it was a different case when it came to PvP or boss battles. This was because skill usage was essential in achieving victory in those fights. Thus, items with only additional magic attack trait had lower market prices, as they were pretty much considered as trash by players.

No one would naturally bother researching about those garbage items. Gu Fei searched pages after pages of the game forums but still came up with no useful information. All he found was that besides weapons with magic attack trait, accessories like rings, necklaces, and emblems had the probability of containing the same trait as well.

The in-game equipment was separated into nine categories: weapon, helmet, body armor, belt, shoes, couple rings, necklace, and emblem.

The fact that Gu Fei's two fingers and neck had remained empty despite grinding on monsters for this long was proof that the drop rate of these accessories was very low. Gu Fei's straw hat and shoes were not actually terrible; they were just not suitable for Mages, which was why Young Master Han and company had constantly criticized and pointed their uselessness.

After a quick check, Gu Fei learned that he could buy accessories

that increased the proc rate of fire attack. He decided to purchase some at the first opportunity, as well as conventional equipment to remain unnoticeable to others.

Gu Fei left the forums after checking the items he planned to purchase. It was then that he spotted the forums' sticky thread – Yunduan City's Close Combat Mage: 'Killing a man in just ten steps, and never stopping once while pursuing his target. Gone with his name and identity once everything ended'.

Gu Fei's heart tightened as he clicked to view the thread. Just as he thought, it was a report about his hunt of No Smile throughout Yunduan City yesterday.

The players, who had kept their ears to the ground, managed to dig out almost all the relevant information about the incident. However, that was not the crux of the matter; the emphasis was on the process in which No Smile had been hunted. All the information was collated from various eyewitnesses' accounts. As the perpetrator, Gu Fei judged the data to be largely accurate.

There were two main discussions that developed regarding the matter.

The first discussion was about the moral implication of the Masked Slayer's action. This was a hot topic that had started during the live broadcast of yesterday's forums. Gu Fei briefly glanced at the various opinions posted on the forums and then dismissed them altogether. He did not feel a shred of guilt toward killing No Smile.

No Smile swindled July first. When he was later defrauded by the professional con-artist Xi Xiaotian, she had done so of her volition and not because of July's siccing. Later on in Parallel World, the wretched No Smile coincidentally became Gu Fei and the mercenary group's latest target after he had harassed July. Gu Fei had destroyed No Smile with a clear conscience, so the vitriol about his actions that littered the forums did not affect him at all.

The second discussion was about his fighting prowess. The news that a Mage had hunted and killed a Thief through close-combat techniques was definitely astounding to hear. Naturally, the online players did not idle around once they had witnessed the fight. A link was immediately posted on the forums that directed players to a different thread that focused on analyzing Gu Fei's expert moves.

Quite a number of players must have used Appraisal on Gu Fei back then, since the post even displayed a complete list of his equipment.

But the thread digressed for a bit, as everyone speculated on where Eddie's Emblem came from. Its ability to increase each of the five different stats by 6 points for a total of 30 points made it an accessory with the highest stat-point boost out of all the available in-game items.

Gu Fei gulped when he saw this. Thankfully, he had seen this thread; otherwise, the Masked Slayer's true identity would be discovered with Eddie's Emblem alone. July and the ladies had probably used Appraisal on him before, so he would immediately be exposed if they stumbled upon this thread.

However, it was unlikely that the girls would divulge this. Gu Fei clung to that thought at this moment. If it is revealed... Gu Fei could not deny how troublesome it would get, as he thought back to the string of players that had chased after him all over Yunduan City.

Gu Fei calmed himself down as he continued to read on. The discussion finally returned back to the thread's main topic several posts afterward, and the players began to discuss Gu Fei's battle skills. Through the details provided by the many onlookers, Gu Fei's online persona was easily deduced: an Agility-based Mage who possessed a weapon with additional magic attack trait. A combination of his swift movements and the said trait had allowed Gu Fei to almost instantly finish off the low HP Thief No Smile.

Many experts analyzed the character in greater detail afterward, resulting in nonstop arguments over their varying opinions. Gu Fei noticed a certain post by a user called Cunning Eye.

This user claimed that Gu Fei had managed to slay No Smile purely by chance. No Smile was a Strength-based Thief, resulting into him losing to the Agility-based Mage Gu Fei. The Thief job class had low HP to begin with, so No Smile could not withstand the physical attack and weapon's fire attack from the Mage. Had he been someone else with higher HP, stronger defense, or faster speed, the outcome would probably be different. Only a few players wore magic resistant armor right now. If No Smile had had magic resistant equipment at the time, the additional fire attack dealt by Gu Fei would be greatly weakened.

Cunning Eye mentioned a detail that nobody had noticed as well. Although No Smile was killed ten times, No Smile's first death, when he was still at level 30, had not been witnessed by anyone; his second death, when he dropped to level 29, had actually been caused by a Thief. Meaning, the Mage only started to hunt No Smile after the latter had dropped two levels. Did that mean that the Mage might not have the confidence to kill No Smile off when the latter was at his peak?

This analysis was logical and made complete sense, provided that it was applied to an average player. Unfortunately, Cunning Eye neglected to account for the fact that Gu Fei knew kung fu.

Backed by his kung fu, Gu Fei had made short work of No Smile in every engagement with just two or three slashes. This truth was hardly noticeable to anyone but supreme experts.

After reading all the replies to this post, Gu Fei felt somewhat disappointed. He had originally expected this post to completely research Gu Fei's character, yet it was just like all the other posts. A discussion that descended into an argument, becoming a match of insults and curses that was ultimately left unsettled. It seemed Gu Fei had to research himself the best way to make the Mage

character fit his expectations.

After leaving the forums, Gu Fei went online.

The first thing he did once he had gotten online was to take off Eddie's Emblem. He had gained too much unwanted attention while assuming his Masked Slayer persona. My identity will get exposed if a bored individual on the street decides to use Appraisal on me, Gu Fei thought. He quickly made his way to the Auction House, intending to quickly buy a new set of equipment to change his image completely.

However, the Auction House was a little strange today. Gu Fei could not use any of the services, and the NPCs working there ignored him completely. Despite repeatedly trying to communicate humbly with the NPCs, they remained oddly indifferent. He felt beleaguered by what was happening. Suddenly, someone tapped his shoulder from behind, "What's the matter, Miles?"

Gu Fei swiftly turned around and saw Brother Assist. He fortunately came across this expert here. He quickly relayed what had just happened and asked Brother Assist about it.

Brother Assist stared at him in shock, "We're thinking about how crazy you were yesterday. Don't tell me you didn't know about the game's PvP rules?"

"What is that?" Gu Fei curiously asked.

Brother Assist hurriedly explained, "In Parallel World, anytime you kill a player, you will accumulate one [PK](#) point. At 1 PK point, only certain NPCs will refuse to service you, and death will result into you dropping two levels. Once your PK value reaches 10 points, NPCs throughout the city won't do business with you, and death will cause you to drop three levels. If your PK value reaches 20 points, NPC guards and patrolling soldiers will arrest you on sight; death will reduce your level by four, while getting captured reduces your level by two plus jail time. At 30 PK points, NPCs will just execute you on the spot, and death will drop you by five

levels.”

“So what should I do?” Gu Fei was stupefied.

“Right now, you should be below 20 PK points. You can just turn yourself in and sit in the jail; every hour you’re jailed will lower your PK point by one! Alternatively, you can drift about outside the city. The PK point will get reduced by one for every two hours you spend outside,” Brother Assist explained.

“Who’s going to choose to stay in prison?! So what if I can’t buy things. That’s no big deal,” Gu Fei said.

Brother Assist nodded, “I’m afraid there’s another important matter you’re not aware of.”

“What?”

“There’s a sort of quest in Parallel World called ‘Bounty Mission’. This mission refreshes daily, and its target is players who have accumulated PK points. It can be done alone or with a mercenary group, and the players will be rewarded according to the PK points of their target. After your strong display yesterday, there’s no doubt that you will be at the top of the Wanted Players list today.”

Gu Fei was dumbfounded. He did not expect that fighting online would be this troublesome.

PK - is short for Player Killing.

Chapter 55 - Serial Number 27149

“Is my identity exposed now that I’m on the Wanted Players list?” Gu Fei asked.

“It isn’t as long as you don’t get caught,” Brother Assist answered.

“Won’t my name be revealed?” Gu Fei asked.

“No,” Brother Assist shook his head, “The people on the list are assigned a serial number each. Right now, you’re probably displayed as fugitive serial number XXXXX on the list.”

“So that’s how it is....”

“Players who accept the ‘Bounty Mission’ will have your location updated on their quest log every five minutes. You just have to calculate the interval properly and move every five minutes, and the players won’t find you easily,” Brother Assist said.

“That makes sense! I’ll get moving, then!” Gu Fei checked the time and saw that he was approaching the five-minute mark since he got online.

“What do you want to buy? I’ll buy it for you,” Brother Assist walked toward the touchscreen interface of the Auction House.

“Okay. Get me an appropriate level 30 mage robe, as well as a necklace, ring, and emblem that increase the proc rate of a weapon’s fire attack,” Gu Fei said.

Brother Assist distanced himself from the interface while saying, “It’s about time. You should get out of here!”

Gu Fei did not even have time to reply.

The two rushed out of the city as they left the Auction House. After walking for a short distance, they heard a flurry of footsteps. Gu Fei looked back and saw a bunch of players heading straight toward the Auction House.

“They can’t all be after me!” Gu Fei expressed his shock.

“It appears they are,” Brother Assist affirmed.

“There’re so many of them!” Gu Fei exclaimed.

“Just turn yourself in,” Brother Assist calmly replied.

“Nah...” Gu Fei declined.

“Perhaps you should cover your face. With many people looking for you, there’s no guarantee that a sharp-eyed player won’t discover you. Those who have accepted this mission will see a conspicuous serial number marking on you,” Brother Assist advised.

“Alright. But I’ll leave the city first. There’re too many pairs of eyes around, which make things difficult,” Gu Fei hastily bolted out of the city. Brother Assist’s speed was not a match for Gu Fei’s, so he could only shout after his fleeing figure, “Be careful!”

Gu Fei waved his hand in acknowledgement without even turning around.

Brother Assist returned to the Auction House alone. Countless players were searching the place thoroughly, with more joining in as time went by. Brother Assist thought he had a good grasp of the situation’s severity, yet he had not expected Gu Fei to attract these many pursuers. Human’s curiosity was indeed a frightening thing.

Brother Assist contacted Young Master Han and his fellow mercenary mates once he had left the Auction House. All were extremely astonished when they heard the news, “WHAT? That guy didn’t know about the PvP rules?”

“That guy is hopeless! Meeting! We’re having an emergency meeting!” Young Master Han first criticized Gu Fei before telling everyone to meet at the usual hangout, Ray’s Bar.

Meanwhile, Gale Force of Traversing Four Seas hurriedly sought their guild leader, Oathless Sword.

“Our chance is here!” The main door to Traversing Four Seas’ guild house almost flew off its hinges when Gale Force came crashing through.

Oathless Sword was currently at the lounge, conversing with a few beauties from their guild. Gale Force’s abrupt interruption made Oathless Sword feel slightly annoyed. He furrowed his brows and said heavily, “Conciseness is a merit. But you must remain calm even when things happen and avoid panicking!”

“The Masked Slayer is on the Wanted Players list!” Gale Force shouted immediately.

“After cutting down No Smile so many times, of course he will be on it,” Oathless Sword said matter-of-factly, remaining composed in front of the babes, “Come. Let’s go take a look.”

Oathless Sword suavely waved goodbye to the ladies and calmly exited the guild house. He gently closed the door behind him as he agitatedly said, “F*CKING HELL! HE’S BEING HUNTED?! Why did he not turn himself in and squat in prison? Won’t his identity be exposed now that everyone is after him?! What’s the point of covering his face, then?!”

Gale Force was speechless.

“Say something!” Oathless Sword’s hurried expression was completely different from how he had acted inside the guild house just now.

“I don’t – I don’t know either! All I heard is that the place with ‘Bounty Mission’ released a new Wanted Players list with a fugitive with 15 PK points. Who else could it be besides that Masked Slayer?”

“Let’s go take a look!” Oathless Sword and Gale Force hurriedly strode off toward the Bounty Assignment Hall.

A large crowd had gathered in front of the Bounty Assignment Hall’s Wanted Players list interface. Oathless Sword’s eyes swept

through the crowd and noticed that many core members of the various guilds in Yunduan City were here as well. Oathless Sword easily guessed their intentions; they hoped to befriend this powerful expert and pull the Masked Slayer into their guilds. Although Oathless Sword had such thoughts as well, he figured that mulling over it was pointless since nobody could tell who would receive such privilege with these many competitors.

Oathless Sword turned to check the Wanted Players list. The Masked Slayer was listed high on the board – PK points: 15, serial number 27149.

Many of the people inside the hall did not immediately receive the mission as they were confident that Gu Fei would turn himself in. They closely observed all the players coming and going since this hall was also a place where fugitives could turn themselves in. Their eyes would periodically gleam whenever they saw a Mage and then be followed by a look of disappointment.

“This explains why he did not turn himself in. Doing so is as good as walking straight into the lion’s den,” Oathless Sword mumbled to himself. Quite a few Mages were entering and exiting the place, yet the serial number 27149 remained on the top spot.

In one corner of the hall, July, Luo Luo, and Lie Lie were observing the human traffic as well.

“Ah, that one! That’s definitely him! He’s wearing a beginner robe!” Lie Lie boomed as she pointed to a player for the seventeenth time.

Luo Luo appraised the player and sighed, “Lie Lie! A pro may not necessarily be handsome, so curb your wishful thinking and stop calling my attention to every good-looking Mage here! That last one is only at level 12.”

“Oh....”

“How long have we been here, anyway?” July asked.

“Close to half an hour,” Luo Luo answered.

“Is it possible that he does not intend to turn himself in?” July wondered.

“That can't be. With a PK value of 15, he'll have to drift outside the city for thirty hours. Doesn't he have to go offline? If he goes to a designated log-off point, any player who has taken the 'Bounty Mission' might manage to kill him off before he reaches the safe zone,” Luo Luo said.

“How else would you explain why he hasn't shown up yet?” July swept her gaze across the Wanted Players list.

“Maybe he has predicted that there'll be plenty of people waiting for him to surrender himself, so he found a place to while his time away instead!” Luo Luo suggested.

“Oh! Guess we've got to wait a bit more, then!”

They held onto that sort of mentality as they patiently waited until it was past an hour.

“Ah! It's – It's – Oh... It's just a Priest,” Lie Lie exclaimed as she pointed at the most beautiful individual she had seen by far.

Luo Luo followed Lie Lie's gaze and her eyes shone.

Luo Luo gently tugged at her friends as she indicated the same person and whispered into their ears, “That's Young Master Han.”

Young Master Han circled the Bounty Assignment Hall once and left quickly. Luo Luo dragged July and Lie Lie and stealthily followed him.

Young Master Han walked at a slow pace. Once he crossed two streets and got on to an isolated alley, he abruptly turned around. The three ladies quickly hid in a corner when they saw him turn.

“Stop hiding and just come out! Someone's already watching your every move!” Young Master Han called out.

“Don't move. He's bluffing,” Lie Lie said.

“He’s not bluffing...” a clear voice sounded from behind the three ladies.

The ladies were dumbfounded. Lie Lie looked back and immediately felt bewildered, “Did you guys hear someone speak?”

July stood still and looked behind them, sighing into the air, “There’s a Thief on Stealth behind us!”

“Can you all come out now?” Young Master Han called out once more.

The three walked out from behind the corner restlessly. Lie Lie hurled some punches and kicks behind her, yet she struck nothing solid.

“You’re pretty careful! To actually have someone trail you,” Luo Luo complimented.

Young Master Han ignored her praise and coldly stated, “Our deal ended yesterday.”

“That’s true. But a new deal can always be made,” Luo Luo reasoned.

“We’re busy right now to accept any new deal,” Young Master Han bluntly said.

“What could you be busy with?” Luo Luo asked.

Young Master Han chuckled dryly, “Do you have to ask?”

“Since the whole thing started because of us, we feel obliged to offer our assistance,” July said sincerely.

“Miss, our service has been paid at a reasonable rate by you. You don’t owe us anything. Everything happening right now is our group’s business. We don’t need you to worry about us. Please take back your kind offer and just be on your way!” Young Master Han turned and prepared to leave after saying this.

“Young Master Han!” Lie Lie hastily shouted.

Young Master Han stopped mid step.

“We know your name and appearance. Aren’t you afraid that we’ll leak this out?” Lie Lie hollered.

“Lie Lie!” July and Luo Luo did not expect Lie Lie to say such a thing.

“Are you threatening me?” Young Master Han turned around and stared at Lie Lie.

“No. What I meant is since you’re okay with us knowing your identity, then why aren’t you fine with letting us know the other members of your group as well? We’ll surely keep it a secret!” Lie Lie promised.

Young Master Han laughed and said to July, “You should ask your guild leader. I believe she’ll understand my intention.”

July froze on the spot.

“Stop following me. My personality isn’t that great and I’m having a bad day, so I may lose my temper. I’ll give you a friendly advice: Don’t acquire the ‘Bounty Mission’ just to find out his identity. He’s cruel and will not go easy on anyone! He’s a real killer!” Young Master Han was filled with resentment as he grinded his teeth over these last few words, turning to leave once more.

“He is far too arrogant!” Lie Lie said indignantly.

“Miss, it’s not polite to speak ill of someone behind his back,” the unseen person suddenly quipped.

“Why are you still here?!” Lie Lie stamped her feet in anger, “Scram, you voyeur!” She threw kicks and punches in the air once more.

“Let’s go, Lie Lie,” July dragged Lie Lie along.

“So are we taking the mission, Sis July?” Luo Luo asked.

“Of course, we’re taking it,” July said decisively, “But we’re not

after his identity; we'll try to see how we can be of help to him."

Chapter 56 - A Quick-Strike Team

Gu Fei had been wandering outside Yunduan City for about an hour. He did a mental calculation based on the stuff he had done to No Smile and guessed that his PK value must be at 15 points right now. Brother Assist had said that he would have to spend thirty hours online to clear off all the PK points.

During these thirty hours, Gu Fei would have to evade capture from the other players who had taken the 'Bounty Mission'. Otherwise, he would be required to squat inside a jail for another fifteen hours; that would mean a full fifteen hours of idle time due to Parallel World's full-immersion system. Fugitive players like him could not clear out their PK points simply by logging off and doing something entertaining in reality. Hence, Gu Fei firmly made up his mind to wander about outside the city to clear off his PK points.

Gu Fei walked at a fast pace while killing the monsters along the way. He did not find himself in a dangerous situation yet since he had been on the move. There was this one time when he heard players' voices from afar, yet those players started fighting one another for some unknown reason. Gu Fei supposed that the two groups were rivals and had bumped into one another by accident, so they chose to clash among themselves and add themselves onto the Wanted Players list instead of chasing after Gu Fei.

Gu Fei felt pressured as time went by, however. There were not a lot of players chasing after him at first, since a large portion of them had stayed near the Bounty Assignment Hall, thinking that he would surrender himself in. Those players hoped to have an easy time catching him by waiting at the hall. But after an hour of waiting at the hall and seeing that the serial number 27149 had remained on top of the Wanted Players list, many of them finally decided to head out.

Many guilds and mercenary groups began investing manpower

into capturing Gu Fei. Everyone headed toward the Masked Slayer's latest coordinates. Among this mass of players was the number one guild in Yunduan City, Traversing Four Seas.

The three core members, Oathless Sword, Gale Force, and Youthful Reflection, led a large portion of their guild members outside the city and arrived at Gu Fei's latest reported location. Unfortunately, Gu Fei had already left the place a few minutes ago. The whole area immediately became flooded with players. After a while, the players, groups, and guilds each rushed to different directions based on their intuitions of where Gu Fei had headed next.

"It's really troublesome with so many people around. Even if the target left any tracks behind, they would all be disturbed," Youthful Reflection swept an irritated gaze over the horde of players busying around the area.

"How do we begin our search?" Oathless Sword asked.

"Suppose that he's a level 30 Mage with full-Agility stats; his Agility should be at 30 points, plus another 30 multiplied by 5, totaling to 180 points. The forums have revealed all his equipment. He's got an accessory called Eddie's Emblem, which adds another 6 points to Agility, bringing everything up to a total of 186 points. As the growth rate of a Mage's Agility is neither reduced nor strengthened, his fastest movement speed should be at 6.2 meters a second. Adding his Light Boots into the equation would further improve his movement speed by 5%, making his average speed to be at 6.51 meters a second. Assuming he's running in a straight line, his next updated coordinates should be at about 1953 meters away. A human's sight can identify another person within the range of 2000 meters. So provided that our line of sight isn't blocked, we should be able to spot him," Youthful Reflection thoroughly deduced.

"So what do we do now?"

"Now? There're three minutes and forty-seven seconds left before his coordinates refresh; at most, his distance from our current location would be 1477.77 meters away. Everyone should look toward a direction that isn't blocked for a figure that is running away," Youthful Reflection smiled.

Everyone began looking around.

"Nothing, huh? That means the path he has chosen is either Yunwu Forest or Oolong Mountain Range," Youthful Reflection pointed toward the two different areas in front of his eyes.

"So what do we do?" Oathless Sword consulted Youthful Reflection once more.

"You guys can just call this off," Youthful Reflection answered.

"WHAT?"

"Frankly speaking, he doesn't need to run. His speed alone is enough to leave a majority of the players chasing after him in the dust. Anyone with Agility-based physique, follow me!" Youthful Reflection ordered.

A few guild members stepped forward; they were either Thieves or Archers.

"Oh, yeah. I almost forgot. You need to be at level 30," Youthful Reflection added.

Two players retreated immediately.

"Archers who have above 150 Agility stats can join in as well!" Youthful Reflection shouted toward them.

One person raised his hand and joined the smaller group.

Youthful Reflection eyed the three Archers and two Thieves and nodded his head, "We're the only team that stands a chance in capturing the Masked Slayer. Let's go!"

"Sh*t. That's it for us?" Gale Force stared dejectedly at the team of six that departed toward Oolong Mountain.

“Youthful Reflection is right; we wouldn’t stand a chance if the Mage concentrated on running,” Oathless Sword touched his heavy armor.

“I can’t just accept this. I’ll try to search around the area. Maybe, I’ll be fortunate enough to bump into him!” Gale Force clenched his fists as he ran off alone.

“Let’s not part yet,” Oathless Sword turned around and addressed the remaining guild members, “Since we’ve accepted this mission, we’ll form teams of five and choose a random place to grind! If one of you catches sight of 27149, don’t reveal yourself. Act nonchalant and call for reinforcement on the guild channel; silently encircle him when the backup arrives, got it?”

All nodded their heads, divided themselves into five teams, and headed to separate directions.

Youthful Reflection brought the five men up the mountain in haste. The coordinates for the Masked Slayer refreshed when they were halfway up, showing that the Mage’s location was indeed somewhere up Oolong Mountain.

“We’re faster than him, so we’ll easily catch up to him provided that we’ve got the right direction,” Youthful Reflection confidently said to everyone.

The others nodded their heads. The Archer with 150 Agility stats was presently lagging behind the other five by quite a few meters.

“Do we have to bring him along?” the four men in front asked one another.

Youthful Reflection smiled, “An extra pair of hands is always welcome. Although he’s slightly slower than us, he’s definitely up to par with that Mage’s speed.” With that, Youthful Reflection turned to the Archer, “Stay close to us!” The Archer nodded his head.

They quickly made their way to the Mage’s latest coordinates,

which happened to be a forked road. The left path led to Oolong Cave, whereas the straight path would go through the Oolong Mountain Range. None of them knew where that straight path would lead.

“Which way now?”

“It would be great if that Mage headed forward. It’s a straight road so we would catch up to him sooner or later... But I doubt he would choose such a rigid path. Let’s just head into Oolong Cave. If the next coordinates indicate that we’re in the wrong direction, we’ll just head back here and take the straight path. There’re only two choices to pick from, anyway.” Youthful Reflection reasoned.

“But what if he turns back by then?” someone asked.

“If he turns back, he’ll bump into the other players heading to his current position. He can’t possibly be that dumb, right? With a five-minute refresh rate, he won’t dare turn back,” Youthful Reflection laughed, “Alright, let’s go! Every second counts.”

The team turned left and hurried along the path to Oolong Cave. They dashed all the way to the cave’s entrance, yet they had not seen any signs of the Masked Slayer. Youthful Reflection looked at the time and said, “If we’ve made the right choice, the only place left for him to hide would be inside the cave.”

“Oolong Cave’s route is complex. It’s a good hiding choice with many players hot on his heels; he can even grind his level along the way. But he has underestimated the number of players after his head. The players tracking him can easily wipe out the monsters inside the cave with sheer numbers alone. It’s a dead end for him now that he has chosen to hide in here,” Youthful Reflection waxed loquaciously, yet he showed slight hesitation, “At this rate, our strike team won’t be of much use.”

“So what do we do now? Wait for reinforcement?” someone asked.

“Of course, not. We’ve already expended this much effort to gain lead. We’re going in,” Youthful Reflection waved his arm and everyone entered the cave. After a short while, the new coordinates for the target refreshed. Youthful Reflection glanced at the location indicated and laughed, “Impressive! I’ve finally understood his intention.”

“And that is?” the people around him asked.

“If we’ve not entered Oolong Cave and only chased after his coordinates, I’m afraid we’d never be able to find him,” Youthful Reflection said.

“Why’s that?”

“The game has two different maps for inside and outside the cave. Each map has separate coordinates, yet the coordinates displaying his whereabouts do not specify whether he is inside or outside the cave. This is probably something that needs to be patched. The people outside the cave right now will probably look for him all over Oolong Mountain according to this new set of coordinates, but I guarantee that they’ll never find him,” Youthful Reflection explained.

“The Masked Slayer must have already let his guard down by now. Let’s not let this opportunity slip away,” Youthful Reflection said firmly.

The six began to head deeper into the cave toward the updated coordinates. Along the way, they realized that all the monsters had more or less been taken care of by the Masked Slayer. Youthful Reflection felt ecstatic, “He’s definitely convinced that he’s in the clear so he began grinding his level. We’ll catch up to him in no time. Everyone, prepare to engage the Masked Slayer at any time. Ha ha ha! He barely left any monsters along the way; isn’t this the same as directing us straight to him?”

They made their way to the indicated location, which was along the path of the killed off monsters. The coordinates refreshed once

more, and Youthful Reflection felt stunned by what he saw.

“What’s the matter? Let’s carry on!”

“The coordinates are wrong!” Youthful Reflection blurted out.

“What?”

“The new coordinates are far from the previous coordinates. The path ahead still has signs of his battle with monsters; how did he cover such a distance while fighting the monsters?”

“What do you mean?”

“Oolong Cave has another floor!” Youthful Reflection realized after a bit.

“Oh? Where’s that?” everyone asked. None of them had ever been here before.

“I don’t know. I’ve never heard of this!” Youthful Reflection furrowed his brows.

“Let’s just carry along this path. The signs of battle here could not be faked, right?” someone suggested. The fallen corpses on the ground pointed out the direction Gu Fei had taken.

“I guess that’s the only choice we have,” Youthful Reflection led everyone onward until the signs came to a sudden halt.

“The way to that floor must be somewhere around here... Everyone, spread out and search,” Youthful Reflection ordered.

Everyone spread out and searched around. Someone quickly found something and excitedly hollered, “There’s a secret entrance here!”

“Where?” Youthful Reflection, who happened to be on the other side of the pathway, quickly made his way over.

As they lifted the iron plate, a tunnel about a man’s height was revealed.

“Thief, activate your Stealth and go down to take a look,”

Youthful Reflection commanded.

The Thief dropped down the passageway and sent a message after a while, “This must be it! This must be the coordinates from before! That guy indeed walked this way.”

“Let’s go!” Youthful Reflection quickly jumped down, and the rest followed suit one by one.

“Ahh!” A sudden scream echoed just as the last person was about to jump down.

“What’s the matter?” everyone in the passageway asked in shock. Their answer was the sound of a heavy plate falling into place.

“Oh, no!” The color drained from their faces and they rushed back to the tunnel’s entrance. Unmistakably, a heavy iron plate was now blocking their way out. The five combined their strength to push the iron plate upward, but it would not even budge. They knew that it had been locked from the outside.

“We’ve been tricked!” Youthful Reflection felt dumbfounded.

Chapter 57 - Escape

Youthful Reflection knew that he had been fooled, yet he did not know when it had started. Had this trap been set up by the Masked Slayer upon entering Oolong Cave and realizing that some players were still after him? Or had he planned to direct pursuers over here from the start?

“Can we push it open?” Youthful Reflection asked.

A Thief, who had already given up on pushing the plate upward, shook his head sadly.

“Who’s left outside?” Youthful Reflection looked at the other four with him.

“Royal God Call. He didn’t jump down,” someone replied.

“He must have been killed off by that guy,” Youthful Reflection assumed as he sighed deeply.

“He’s still killing players despite having 15 PK points?!” someone asked in astonishment.

“It’s PRECISELY because he has 15 PK points that he’s not reluctant to add one more point!” Youthful Reflection replied.

“Something’s off. The guild tab shows that Royal is still at level 30; this means that he hasn’t died,” someone voiced out his discovery.

“Quickly message him!” a few of them shouted.

“I’m not dead. He slashed me once, locked the iron plate, and ran off,” Royal God Call messaged back.

“Locked?”

“Yup. The entrance has a padlock, which he locked. How am I going to open it?” Royal God Call asked.

“Since the Masked Slayer can open this passageway’s entrance, it

means that he has the key. Quickly get someone to chase after him!” Youthful Reflection yelled. He then frantically spread the word on the guild channel about the Masked Slayer’s location in Oolong Cave.

At this moment, Gu Fei and Royal God Call just exited Oolong Cave.

“That ‘Ahh!’ you cried out earlier isn’t good,” Gu Fei commented.

“Yeah? I thought so, too. I almost burst out laughing back then, and it nearly turned into ‘Ha!’ You think this is easy for me?” Royal God Call asked cheekily.

The two followed the mountain path leading down and a few figures appeared into view near the forked road.

“How was it?” Brother Assist immediately asked as soon as the two were within earshot.

“Of course everything’s OK!” Royal God Call felt pleased with himself.

“Hmph. Youthful Reflection is still far off from being able to match wits with me,” Young Master Han laughed coldly. His face darkened when he faced Gu Fei, “Why didn’t you follow the exact coordinates I’ve set for you?”

“Are you kidding me? The coordinates you set were either a huge sinkhole or on a stalagmite; how am I going to stand on that? Are you trying to get me killed on purpose?” Gu Fei retorted.

“Alright, there’s no time. Let’s get to the next step of our plan!” Sword Demon interjected.

Once Sword Demon mentioned this next step, Gu Fei became a little teary-eyed, “Can I not go?”

“No. You have to go!” Young Master Han sounded resolute.

“Hey, are you thinking of pranking me once more?” Gu Fei expressed his suspicion.

Young Master Han replied icily, “This is definitely the best method to escape from those who are hot on your heels. Everyone will definitely stop chasing you if you run along this path through the Oolong Mountain Range.”

“How much longer until the coordinates refresh?” Brother Assist asked.

“Nine seconds,” Gu Fei answered.

“Time to go!” Brother Assist patted him on the back encouragingly.

“Good luck!” Sword Demon came forward and patted him as well.

“You can do it!” Royal God Call also joined in and patted him on the back.

“Mhmm!” War Without Wounds did not say a word beyond a purposeful nod.

“Scram!” Young Master Han felt irritated just by looking at Gu Fei’s face.

“I’m off!” Gu Fei saw the coordinates refresh and immediately ran down the mountain path.

“He won’t meet anyone else along that road, yeah?” Royal God Call muttered.

“Definitely not,” Young Master Han said confidently, “The coordinates he left in Oolong Cave fooled everyone into looking for him on the other side of Oolong Mountain Range. They’ll need at least ten minutes to get to our current position.”

“That’s not right,” Royal God Call cried out, “Why will it take them ten minutes? Miles has his coordinates updated every five minutes!”

“Mmhm. They’ll be searching around the first coordinates for five minutes, before discovering that the coordinates have been

updated. And then, they'll proceed with haste toward the second coordinates. They'll actually need twelve minutes," Young Master Han corrected his previous deduction.

Royal God Call felt confused, "And what about the third coordinates?"

Young Master Han had a pained expression, "If they move toward the third coordinates before even reaching the second coordinates, they'll simply come to the mountain's dead end after four minutes...."

"And then what's next?"

"Next? They can only turn back...."

"But by then, Miles will be on his fourth coordinates."

"Exactly," Young Master Han nodded, "But they still have to go back to the second coordinates before they can carry on chasing after him. Not even I can calculate how much time it will take them to run back and forth like this. They'll have my utmost admiration if they still persist on pursuing him at that point."

"That's terrible!" Royal God Call sighed.

"Others have it way worse," Young Master Han lifted his thumb and pointed back to the cave's entrance some distance away, "Those guys will be looking for Gu Fei using the coordinates in Oolong Cave... You can't really blame me for being excessive, right?"

They turned and watched the Traversing Four Seas' reinforcement march under Oathless Sword's command up the mountain path toward them.

"Oh, yeah! I still have to lead those guys to where the trapped Youthful Reflection and company are and save them," Royal God Call suddenly remembered.

"Do you have the key?" Brother Assist asked.

“Nope,” Royal God Call answered.

“Then, where’s the key?” everyone asked.

“It’s in the secret passageway,” Royal God Call replied.

“In the secret passageway?” They were all puzzled.

“Yeah... Miles said he had thrown it in there,” Royal God Call said.

“So how are you going to get them out?” Only the honest Sword Demon was thinking about this problem.

“I don’t know... I am only going in there once more because I am kind of obliged to do so. Come to think of it, I think I might have forgotten the way to the secret passageway already,” Royal God Call said as he waved to the four men, “I’m going there now.”

He then rushed down the mountain path after saying goodbye to them. As he ran down the path, he shouted, “Guild Leader! Bad news! Reflection and the rest are trapped in an underground tunnel!”

“Let’s leave, too,” The four began to make their way down as well.

“I wonder where that road leads?” Brother Assist asked inquisitively, referring to the path Gu Fei had just taken.

“You can ask that to Miles when he returns,” Young Master Han said lightly.

“Can Miles bear to stay online for thirty hours? He usually plays Parallel World for three or four hours at most,” Brother Assist asked.

“That’s his problem,” Young Master Han replied.

“Hope there won’t be any issue...” Brother Assist said.

“There won’t be!” Sword Demon was confident.

“Mhmm!” War Without Wounds nodded.

“Our group won’t be accepting any requests until Miles returns. Take a vacation, everyone. You’re on your own for the time being!” Young Master Han said.

Gu Fei was running quickly along the Oolong Mountain Range at the moment. The mountain road was rough and wide, with the mountain sheer on the left and a cliff on the right. A cloud-like mist hung in the air on the road in front and behind him. No monsters for Gu Fei to kill could be seen on this road, making the entire trip rather boring. Gu Fei decided to increase his pace in the hope of immediately reaching a new map where he could grind in.

News spread in Yunduan City an hour later, stating that the various players, groups, and guilds had returned to the city one after another. They all declared their intention to abandon the ‘Bounty Mission’. A lot of these players suffered from short-term trauma as a result of their recent experience. Whenever they heard positions being called out with numbers, they would immediately go catatonic. Some even suffered a more severe case of trauma, where they would snap easily whenever people in the taverns called certain table numbers aloud.

Traversing Four Seas had it the worst. They did not even catch a glimpse of the Masked Slayer after searching all over Oolong Cave and were rather helpless regarding that rusted padlock. Youthful Reflection and the four players with Agility-based physiques, who had been trapped in that cramped tunnel for quite a while, decided to make their way to the other end of the passageway in the hope of finding an alternate exit. What they discovered there was the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto’s lair, and what happened afterward was more or less expected.

This nightmarish experience was made even more unbearable by the series of events that followed. Just as Youthful Reflection and the four were sent back to the spawn point, Oathless Sword announced on the guild channel: The Henchman guarding the passageway had respawned and was successfully beaten. They now

had the key and could free Youthful Reflection and the rest who were trapped inside... Meanwhile, the other guild members searching for the Masked Slayer deep within Oolong Cave were all wiped out by the bandits that Sooto had summoned over upon getting into a fight with Youthful Reflection and company. By the time the players of Traversing Four Seas left Oolong Cave, they were all physically and mentally worn down.

Gu Fei carefully read the news that the other mercenary group members had sent him, while making his lonely way through the mountain range. Suddenly, Gu Fei spotted the blurry outline of a humanoid figure in the fog just ahead.

“Finally! A monster has appeared after walking for so long!” Gu Fei felt excited. He limbered up his body and pulled out Flames of Baptism from his dimensional pocket as he charged forward.

Gu Fei began to see the silhouette more clearly as he drew nearer. He had yet to recognize the figure, but the sack that the person was carrying looked surprisingly familiar.

Gu Fei deduced the person’s identity after getting close enough, and he took the piece of black cloth off his face.

“Xiaoyu?” Gu Fei probed by calling out her name.

The Warrior with the sack turned around. Who else could it be but Xiaoyu?

“Miles!” Xiaoyu was equally shocked, “What are you doing here? Are you on a quest?”

“Uhh... Yes, quest! I’m definitely on a quest!” Gu Fei nodded with relief. He was thinking of how he should answer Xiaoyu’s question, yet she had actually given him the answer to it.

“Oh, are you headed to Yeguang Village?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Yup!” Gu Fei casually replied, all the while wondering inside where in the world that place was.

That's wonderful! So am I!" Xiaoyu said.

"Is that so? That's great..." Gu Fei said.

"Shall we go there, together?" Xiaoyu asked.

"Let's," Gu Fei answered.

"What quest are you doing?" Xiaoyu asked.

"Oh, 'Eddie's Mission'," Gu Fei replied offhandedly.

"What sort of quest is that?" Xiaoyu felt curious.

"Um, it's a chain quest," Gu Fei replied.

"CHAIN QUEST?!" Xiaoyu exclaimed, "You got a chain quest?!"

"Uhhh... I got it by chance," Gu Fei did not know how to explain properly how he had acquired the quest.

"I'll help you!" Xiaoyu declared.

"Eh, well... I'm still not sure how to proceed with it, so I'm just trying things out by going to Yeguang Village," Gu Fei said.

"Of course chain quest won't be easy to accomplish! But now that I'm here to help you, there's nothing to worry about! I am a quest expert, after all!" Xiaoyu thumped her chest as she said this.

Chapter 58 - Crossing the Oolong Mountain Range

Gu Fei decided to consult the self-proclaimed Quest Expert, Xiaoyu, “Do you know what kind of quest ‘Eddie’s Mission’ is?”

“Every chain quest is unique. Obviously, I wouldn’t know anything about yours, you dummy!” Xiaoyu said.

Gu Fei felt very aggrieved. Was there anything worse than being called a dummy by such a klutz?

“But I do know of a quest called ‘The Kidnapped Eddie’. Not sure if yours and that are related, though,” Xiaoyu thought aloud.

“Tell me more about it,” Gu Fei requested.

“The wandering hero, Eddie, had been ambushed by the Mountain Bandits while passing through Oolong Mountain and was imprisoned by their Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto. Find a way to save him,” Xiaoyu recited.

“Oh? Have you accepted that quest before?” Gu Fei asked.

“Nope! I just heard about it in passing. No one has managed to finish it because nobody knows where Eddie is being kept!” Xiaoyu said.

“It’s in Sooto’s hut!” Gu Fei blurted out.

“How do you know that?” Xiaoyu questioned.

“The Eddie from my quest is the same Eddie that you just mentioned. Of course, I’ll know where he’d been hidden,” Gu Fei reasoned.

“Oh! New info! I better write this down,” Xiaoyu dropped the sack in an instant and took out a little booklet with a quill pen from her dimensional pocket. Gu Fei moved closer and saw Xiaoyu write on the booklet: Eddie is in Sooto’s hut.

“Uhh... Sooto’s hut. Was Eddie inside his bedroom?” Xiaoyu suddenly turned around to ask Gu Fei this.

“That... Must be!” Gu Fei answered.

“Why did he keep Eddie in his bedroom?” Xiaoyu thought aloud, “Were there some untold secrets between those two?”

“Oh, maybe,” Gu Fei said.

“Something like Brokeback Mountain?” Xiaoyu widened her eyes.

“Perhaps!”

“You think so, too?” Xiaoyu was visibly elated.

Gu Fei did not comment further, as he saw Xiaoyu conscientiously write down another line of sentence at the corner listing Eddie’s information. He noticed that she ended it off with: He has an affair with Sooto.

“Alright! Let’s carry on,” After writing all this, she put away the booklet and lifted the sack once more.

“What’s in the sack?” Gu Fei patted it lightly.

“Food,” Xiaoyu replied.

“Food?” Gu Fei felt shocked.

“I don’t know how long it’ll take to get to Yeguang Village, so I brought some food in case I get hungry along the way,” Xiaoyu stated matter-of-factly.

Players would definitely feel hungry after staying in Parallel World for long periods of time, yet the hunger they felt in-game was actually them feeling hungry in reality. Naturally, one would have to consume actual nourishment – and not in-game food – in reality to satiate this hunger. All the in-game food only served the purpose of recovering HP and replenishing stamina while a player rested.

And even if the food would come in handy, there was no need to bring a whole sack of it! A whole sack of food... Gu Fei reckoned that the food supplies could last them through an expedition if they were careful with their food consumption. However, he was doubtful that this so-called Yeguang Village would require them to travel as far as twenty-five thousand miles.

“It’s not just food! There’s also water. Are you thirsty? Want to drink some?” Xiaoyu immediately followed up Gu Fei’s query with an invitation, placing down the sack to retrieve some water for him.

“No thanks. I’m not thirsty,” Gu Fei hurriedly stopped her.

In a flash, the two had walked for an hour, and they pretty much exhausted every possible conversation topic out there. Conversing with Xiaoyu was actually difficult. For instance, Gu Fei had to give her three minutes to process a joke he had just told; in that time, he would have already forgotten the point of telling the joke. And when it was Xiaoyu’s turn to tell a joke to Gu Fei, he could not find anything funny about it at all. This was because it would always go along this line: “I have a friend. One day, he walked into a tree—HA HA HA HA HA....”

Xiaoyu would burst into peals of laughter before she even finished telling the joke. Gu Fei could only eke out a fake smile at this.

Nevertheless, no trip, no matter the distance, would be too tiring if a person was accompanied by someone. As long as there was someone to share the experience, foolish or not, it would be comforting enough.

Through their concerted effort, they finally got past the Oolong Mountain Range. Rolling plains, wildlands, hills, and forests were displayed before their eyes, much like what players of Yunduan City would expect to see when they left its borders. Gu Fei looked at the time and realized that it had taken them almost three hours

to get through the Oolong Mountain Range. Of course, once he had realized that he was no longer being pursued by people from the city, he matched his pace with Xiaoyu's and no longer madly dashed forward.

But the sight of monsters ahead was what truly pleased Gu Fei. Young Master Han and the rest's plan for him was exactly this: escape into a place where there would be monsters but had few players roaming about. Gu Fei would then grind there for up to thirty hours and would only return to Yunduan City once he cleared off all the PK points.

Gu Fei had originally thought that there would be monsters along the Oolong Mountain Range, yet all he encountered were clouds of mist. Although he had the company of a lady through the foggy environment, she was someone who had claimed to be his 'brother'. Hence, there was not even a hint of romance in the air. Gu Fei truly felt that he had been done some injustice by making him cross the mountain path for three hours.

Gu Fei's hands were already itching for a fight. He rushed forward after taking out the Chinese broadsword and slashed deeply into the monster, killing it instantly. The monster was obviously low level, as it had been insta-killed by Gu Fei's attack without the additional fire attack proccing.

"This can't be right!" Gu Fei muttered to himself. Basic gaming logic dictated that the further players went from cities like Yunduan City, the better the grinding maps would be. And yet, he found himself in the opposite situation in an unknown distant place after spending three hours to pass through the Oolong Mountain Range... Could things GET any more depressing?!

"Why are the monsters over here so low level?!" Gu Fei complained to Xiaoyu.

Xiaoyu did not hear Gu Fei's words as she was busy looking into the horizon while mumbling, "Where is Yeguang Village?"

“Do you know?” Xiaoyu turned her head and asked Gu Fei.

“I’ll – I’ll help you ask!” Gu Fei felt impressed by Xiaoyu’s boldness to spend three hours crossing the Oolong Mountain Range without knowing her actual destination. Thus, he decided to help her out by asking around.

Gu Fei pulled up his friends’ list. He knew someone who had an even greater information network than Brother Assist – the BONAFIDE Information Expert, Fleeting Smile.

“Are you there? I’ve got something to ask you,” Gu Fei began.

“I am a scrupulous gaming employee...” Fleeting Smile stated immediately.

“Is this an auto-reply?” Gu Fei asked.

“No....”

“Why do you always say that line, then?!” Gu Fei bemoaned.

“Because you know my real identity,” Fleeting Smile answered.

“You revealed it yourself!”

“Should I silence you for good and leave no traces behind, then?”

Gu Fei was left speechless, not knowing how to reply to such a question.

“What’s your question? I’ll tell you if I can,” Fleeting Smile finally relented.

“Oh, do you know the way to Yeguang Village? It’s just pointing out which way, so it’s okay for you to reveal it, right?” Gu Fei asked.

“So you’ve found a clue for that chain quest?” Fleeting Smile remarked.

“What clue?” Gu Fei was puzzled.

“...I didn’t say anything,” Fleeting Smile replied.

“How do I get to Yeguang Village? You can’t even tell me that?”

“It’s pretty far; first, you have to pass through the Oolong Mountain Range,” Fleeting Smile answered.

“I’m past that.”

“Wow. It must have been tough for you to run that far!” Fleeting Smile commended Gu Fei.

“...Where do we go from there next?” Gu Fei asked.

“Next? Find someone and ask that person. The players over there should have an idea!” Fleeting Smile said.

“Players? There are players here?” Gu Fei looked all around him and saw no one.

“You’ve just passed the mountain range, yeah? It’s still far from the capital city. Head in the northwest direction and you’ll reach Yueye City. The players in that city definitely know how to get to Yeguang Village,” Fleeting Smile instructed.

“If it’s this far from this region’s city, why is the monsters’ level so low?” Gu Fei questioned.

“Ornamental; those monsters are just ornamental. Who’d be bored enough to run in that direction?” Fleeting Smile asked rhetorically.

“Alright, thanks!” Gu Fei got the answer he wanted.

“No problem. But I’ll remind you of something,” Fleeting Smile added.

“What?” Gu Fei asked.

“‘Bounty Mission’ is valid throughout the entire gaming server. That means players from Yueye City can see your serial number 27149 on their Wanted Players list. Since it’s indicated that you’re a player in Yunduan City, nobody will bother to accept the mission. But that’s not a guarantee, don’t you think? So try to be careful,” Fleeting Smile warned.

“Aren’t you going against the rule here?” Gu Fei teased.

“This isn’t going against the rule. Anyone who seriously reads the introduction regarding ‘Bounty Mission’ will know of this. Just treat me like a conscientious player,” Fleeting Smile replied.

“Much thanks, then. I’ll treat you to a drink when I get back to Yunduan City,” Gu Fei promised.

“You’re welcome.”

“Alright, that’s all. I’ve to go,” Gu Fei closed the conversation window.

“G*dd*mm*t. My tongue slipped...” Fleeting Smile muttered to himself. He was currently in Yunduan City, having not stopped monitoring Gu Fei’s activities. He had even passionately followed Thousand Miles Drunk’s hunt for No Smile yesterday. Actually, the progress of Gu Fei’s chain quest was what he had specifically been monitoring.

Chain quests were a major feature of Parallel World. The design team had sacrificed a copious amount of their brain cells to conceive, sequence, and create each one of those chain quests. Hence, Fleeting Smile and the rest of the R&D Department considered them as their magnum opus. Just thinking about the potential events and plot twists that could happen in a singlechain quest had them beside themselves with anticipation. Upon learning that Gu Fei had gotten a chain quest, Fleeting Smile immediately checked the data files for it and committed the possible permutations this randomly generated quest could have into his memory. However, the actual owner of this quest, Gu Fei, had yet to make any progress on it at all.

The sense of anxiety that gripped Fleeting Smile’s heart was akin to creating a masterpiece that no one could appreciate or care. Therefore, Fleeting Smile had instinctively shown elation upon hearing Gu Fei’s question about Yeguang Village. He assumed that Gu Fei had managed to find the clue to continue the quest. Alas,

that was not the case, and his blunder actually provided Gu Fei information instead. Fleeting Smile instantly felt miserable when he recalled this and could only hope that Gu Fei had not noticed.

However, how could the quick-witted Gu Fei not notice Fleeting Smile's slip of the tongue? As he and Xiaoyu made their way toward Yueye City, Gu Fei carefully digested that bit of information.

Chapter 59 - How Things Are in Yueye City

Fleeting Smile unintentionally said something about Gu Fei finding a clue to the chain quest, 'Eddie's Mission', when the latter had asked for directions to Yeguang Village. Because of this slip of the tongue, Gu Fei somewhat deduced that a link to the chain quest existed in that village. Gu Fei always thought that finding out the mission Eddie had taken would unravel as well as help continue the chain quest. By the looks of things, the clue was of Eddie either passing through that village once or being an inhabitant of that place.

It was easy to find out which of these two the clue was. Gu Fei only had to ask the NPCs in that village about Eddie.

Gu Fei considered all this as he and Xiaoyu steadily walked toward the city. The outline of Yueye City could be seen from their current location, and it looked rather unremarkable just like Yunduan City. Xiaoyu had a dumbfounded look on her face as she pointed at the city, "That's a really big village."

Gu Fei did not know whether to laugh or cry at her comment, "That's not Yeguang Village but Yueye City. It's just like Yunduan City. We'll ask the locals for direction to Yeguang Village since it's probably nearby." Gu Fei looked around and spotted a few players engaging the monsters scattered about. The area was apparently not a popular grinding map, seeing that there were not many players around. Gu Fei chose a random player and walked toward him with Xiaoyu.

This player wore the signature clothes for Thieves and ran with brisk footsteps. He avoided half of the monsters he encountered instead of confronting them. The player would also bend over from time to time as if he was searching for something on the ground.

Gu Fei and Xiaoyu chased the person as they yelled to get his

attention.

“Hey, buddy. What’s your name?” Gu Fei asked as soon as they caught up to the player who had stopped running.

“Master Kang,” the player replied as he examined the two.

“Ha ha ha ha ha! Your IGN is the same as that instant noodle brand!” Xiaoyu chortled. This sort of joke was right up her alley. Instead, a Mage having the name Fireball was a more complex joke to her.

The person’s face turned unpleasant as he said, “It’s not a name I chose for myself.”

Hearing that this player was a member of the forced-to-bear-an-undesirable-IGN club like him, Gu Fei immediately felt a slight sense of closeness to him. He stopped Xiaoyu’s laughter as he continued to ask, “We’re trying to get to Yeguang Village; do you know the way?”

Master Kang looked at the two with shock, “Appraisal doesn’t work on either of you! You guys must have a higher level than me! Level 30, perhaps?”

The two nodded their heads.

“You guys are at level 30, yet you don’t know how to get there?” Master Kang began to regard them with suspicion.

“You’re mistaken. We’re not from Yueye City but from Yunduan City, which is somewhere over there,” Gu Fei pointed toward the direction of Yunduan City as he explained.

Master Kang’s eyes suddenly shone brightly, “Really, you’re from another city? You actually traveled on foot from there to here? Which road did you take? How long did you walk?”

“We trekked through the Oolong Mountain Range for three hours at a leisure pace,” Gu Fei gave an overall answer.

“Come here! Let me ask you something,” Master Kang pulled Gu

Fei toward himself, “In Yunduan City, have you seen a plant with green leaves and pink – or rosy red – flowers? The leaves are about this big,” Master Kang gave an estimated measurement with his hands.

“Nope,” Gu Fei swiftly shook his head.

“Think this through first,” Master Kang maintained a hopeful look at Gu Fei.

“Green leaves with pink or rosy red flower petals... I’ve seen some plants similar to your description but never one with leaves THAT big! So my answer is still no,” Gu Fei said firmly as he made the same hand gesture. The leaf size that Master Kang had gestured was ridiculously huge. Gu Fei estimated that a plant with such large leaves would most likely be about a man’s height; ergo, it should no longer be called a plant but a small tree instead! Gu Fei had definitely not seen something like that in all his travels.

“What sort of plant is that?” Xiaoyu asked curiously.

“Oh, I’m an Herbalist looking for that medicinal herb among others. Is either of you an Herbalist? If you guys aren’t, then there won’t be any point in me sharing information about that plant.”

Gu Fei and Xiaoyu were no longer at a loss. Gu Fei, in particular, did not have much knowledge about the crafting profession except for the fact that there were currently five main types of it: Chef, Blacksmith, Tailor, Herbalist, and Alchemist. Chef made food, Blacksmith produced weapons, Tailor sewed clothing, Herbalist researched medicine, and Alchemist crafted magic staves or similar equipment, as well as accessories.

“If possible, try to look for it yourself in Yunduan City! Don’t just take our words for it. After all, we’re not experts when it comes to plants,” Gu Fei advised.

Master Kang nodded, yet his face showed worry, “Yunduan City may not be very far, but I heard that it’s a very dangerous place.”

“How so?” Gu Fei felt puzzled.

“Heard that the top killer in the entire gaming server is in that city. He got 15 PK points in a day from hunting a single player all over the city. He even caused that player to drop eight levels, and yet no one dared to stop him. It’s far too frightening,” Master Kang said in a frightened voice.

Gu Fei could only grimace in response, while Xiaoyu became upset, “What did you say? Do you even know who that killer hunted? It’s a rotten-to-the-core swindler.”

Master Kang nodded his head, “Heard about that as well. Hot da*n! For that guy to take such extreme measures... He must have been cheated horribly by that swindler in the past.”

Gu Fei felt so mad that he almost fainted. How had the entire story become this twisted just by spreading beyond the Oolong Mountain Range? This in-game information had been spread through the online forums; how could it deviate so far from the truth when there was a centralized platform to clarify the validity of any in-game information or story?

Gu Fei had actually forgotten to consider an important factor. Players might have spawned in different cities and regions, yet their connections in reality remained the same. It was very unlikely for two friends in reality to spawn in the same city in-game. So even if there were ten Oolong Mountain Ranges between these people, they would not be able to prevent the two from exchanging information with each other. In fact, a majority of the players considered the account of their friends in Yunduan City to be far more credible than the information that they could read online. Since many of them preferred passing information via the word-of-mouth route, they would naturally receive colorful versions of events, including that of Gu Fei’s exciting activity yesterday.

But now was not the time for Gu Fei to fuss over this matter with

Master Kang, as the latter had yet to mention the way to Yeguang Village after talking with him for so long.

“Alright! Since I’m looking for herbs, it doesn’t matter where I go. I’ll bring you guys over to Yeguang Village myself!” Master Kang graciously offered.

“Many thanks,” Gu Fei said.

The three began to make their way to Yeguang Village. Master Kang, who took the lead, would bend over from time to time to pluck some grass or herbs. As they slowly got closer to the more popular grinding maps, the players the three encountered gradually increased as well. The proportion of monsters to players also started to look similar to that infamous Yunliao Farm’s. However, the rule that the players had set up here was somewhat different. Yunliao Farm had the unspoken rule of no kill-stealing between players, yet it was the opposite in Yueye City. Players here openly fought with one another for the first kills over the monsters.

Along the way, Gu Fei saw many players carrying crudely made bamboo pole flags with different scribbles on the cloth. These players would often holler, “This land here belongs to us. Death awaits those who trespass!”

Players, who could do such declarations, were backed by many others on the side. However, such declarations had no guarantee of working. This was because another group with more power could easily take down the flag to challenge the claim if the spot was to their fancy. Since leveling was not easy, Gu Fei noticed that everyone was actually not willing to fight to the death. Most groups tended to send out representatives to participate in a one-on-one bout, which would stop once a certain HP threshold was crossed. This way, the instances when players would drop level after dying happened a lot less than in Yunliao Farm.

Naturally, the method was only effective if the two parties

involved had the strength to clash at a team level. If a player attempted the challenge alone, he could only wait for his death.

Gu Fei noticed their guide, Master Kang, had lost the spring in his steps as they were making their way through this map. Master Kang cautiously walked along the road with his head lowered, barely sparing a glance at the monsters around them. He was obviously very used to how things were here. Master Kang was truly a native of Yueye City.

Only after passing through the map did Master Kang finally sigh in relief. As someone who had grown accustomed to how things were locally, he carefully explained to Gu Fei and Xiaoyu, “I was worried that you two would accidentally cause a scene back there, since I forgot to mention how you guys should behave when in that area. It’s a good thing that nothing happened.”

Gu Fei thought of something and asked, “If we die here, will we respawn back in Yunduan City? Or will we revive at the spawn point in Yueye City?”

“I don’t know as well,” Master Kang answered as he pointed to somewhere in front of him, “Yeguang Village is just ahead.”

“Thanks,” Gu Fei hurriedly said. He could make out a tavern near the village’s entrance, “Shall we head over? I’ll treat you to a drink.”

“No need for that. I don’t drink,” Master Kang rejected the invitation with a wave of his hand, “I’m leaving. If you two need me for anything else, just message me. Call me when you’re about to head back to Yunduan City, and I’ll join you guys if I can.”

“No problem,” After adding one another as friends, Master Kang entered the forest nearby and continued looking for herbs.

Gu Fei and Xiaoyu entered Yeguang Village, which was inside a forest. The dense leaves of the towering trees in the surroundings caused the sunlight to filter through with difficulty, casting

scattered shadows all over the village. A great ambience permeated the air, as if a chain quest of great importance could originate from here.

“What’s your quest, Xiaoyu?” Gu Fei wanted to finish off the easy quest first.

“Find Mr. Adrian, and retrieve a batch of gold ore from him,” Xiaoyu read her mission aloud.

“Let’s do yours first!” Gu Fei suggested.

The two headed to the tavern as they conversed. Quests in online games were not very different from single-player RPGs; hence, places like a tavern were always the best to gather information.

“Boss, do you know anyone called Mr. Adrian?” Xiaoyu asked in a practiced tone.

“Yes. Mr. Adrian is the wealthiest individual in the village. He lives in a big mansion beside the church over by the east side,” the tavern owner answered.

“Thank you, boss,” Xiaoyu maintained a polite tone despite the fact that she was talking to an AI. This was because her heart’s passion to activate a hidden quest was strong.

Once Xiaoyu was done talking, Gu Fei also asked the tavern owner in a similar manner, “Boss, do you know anyone called Eddie?”

“Mister, the road is long and hard. Why don’t you have a drink to relieve your tiredness?”

Gu Fei had no idea what went wrong.

Xiaoyu was much more experienced, so she immediately dragged Gu Fei off, “He doesn’t know.”

As they walked to the east side of the village, Gu Fei kept on asking the locals the same question. However, none of them could give him the answer he wanted.

Just what was going on? Gu Fei thought hard and realized the root of the issue. Eddie's Emblem! Gu Fei kept the deceased Eddie's belonging into his pocket instead of wearing it. One of the conditions to trigger the quest was possibly equipping it. Without wearing it, NPCs would only see Gu Fei as a nonsensical person and would treat him just like any normal player.

As he thought of this, Gu Fei silently pinned on the emblem and immediately felt countless eyes staring at him. Gu Fei steeled his nerves and headed toward the fifth NPC.

Chapter 60 - Are you the chosen hero

Gu Fei had been closely observing his surroundings ever since he arrived at Yeguang Village; he only felt comfortable enough to equip Eddie's Emblem upon noticing that no other players were around.

Almost all at once, the village NPCs, including the irrelevant ones that they had asked for directions previously, began to take note of his presence. Gu Fei became even more convinced that Eddie's Emblem was the key factor for the quest after seeing their reaction. He braced himself and walked toward a NPC who was staring at him.

And yet, that particular NPC walked away indifferently even before Gu Fei could get near him. Judging from his expression, he seemed to be trying to keep himself from coming into contact with Gu Fei.

Gu Fei refused to accept this outcome, so he sped up and chased after the NPC. The NPC was obviously not programmed to run fast as Gu Fei caught up to him shortly. He swiftly blocked the NPC's path forward and was just about to say something, when the NPC avoided eye contact and headed another way.

"How very odd!" Xiaoyu found the sight very intriguing. As Xiaoyu caught up to the NPC as well, she asked, "Do you know where Mr. Adrian is?"

"Mr. Adrian is the wealthiest man in our village. He lives just beside the church. It's that mansion over there," the NPC wore a friendly smile when interacting with her. He even gave Xiaoyu detailed information about her target.

"What's going on? Why is he ignoring you?" Xiaoyu scratched her head.

"Must have something to do with my quest's plot," Gu Fei said

this while pondering on the same thing in his head. Parallel World's NPCs did not possess sentience like human beings and were just AIs programmed to function in certain ways. So when this particular villager was confronted with inquiries from Xiaoyu, he still replied properly despite not possessing the exact answer. However, when Gu Fei was the one speaking to him or pulling at his hands, only one reaction would surface: the NPC turning around and avoiding all contacts with Gu Fei.

This was a clear indication for Gu Fei that the NPCs were avoiding him on purpose.

Gu Fei noticed as well that after leaving the NPC alone, the latter stopped walking at a certain distance and cautiously stole glances at him. Gu Fei looked around and saw that every NPC behaved in a similar way. Fortunately, a small portion of these NPCs remained the same even after he had equipped Eddie's Emblem.

Gu Fei thought of an idea and quickly approached one such NPC. As expected, the NPC did not avoid Gu Fei. The NPC even looked him in the eye as Gu Fei arrived by his side.

"Any idea on who Eddie is?" Gu Fei asked.

"No, but you should try asking the village chief. He is knowledgeable on a lot of things," the NPC answered.

Gu Fei felt astounded for a moment. Afterward, he looked for another NPC with the same mannerism and received the same reply to the same question.

"Who is the village chief?" Gu Fei asked a follow-up question.

"Edwin is our village chief. He lives in a small hut by the woods," The NPC raised his hand and pointed at a direction as he answered Gu Fei.

"Ah, you managed to obtain the answer to your question! That's how it is with quests. As long as you ask every NPC, there will surely be someone who knows the answer," the experienced

Xiaoyu lectured Gu Fei.

While the method sounded dumb, the approach was undeniably logical. Gu Fei obtained the answer by asking the right NPCs after he had observed their different reactions. As for Xiaoyu, she obtained the answer to her question not by observing the NPCs' different reactions but by straightforwardly asking everyone available. The NPCs were either friendly or hostile toward Gu Fei.

Why was the situation like this? It was probably something crucial to the current quest.

Gu Fei could not think of any valid reason at the moment, so he could only follow the instruction given by the previous NPCs and visit the village chief in a small hut by the woods.

After finding the hut, they knocked on its door. A bearded old man with gray hair opened the door and came out to meet them. The protagonists of games were usually designed to be young and promising. It would have been bizarre to hear about an old man saving the world in games. The elderly in games were usually old-fashioned, stubborn, timid, and clueless. Once in a while, a few wise ones with short lifespan would appear. Their roles involved either sacrificing their lives for plot advancement or fueling the resolution of protagonists. These were all common tropes in games.

“Village Chief Edwin, do you know of a guy called Eddie?” Gu Fei asked with anticipation. He suddenly realized that doing quests could be very exciting due to this feeling of anticipation.

“Eddie? He’s a nice young man. He made a promise to help our village before,” Chief Edwin answered.

“He’s dead,” Gu Fei said sorrowfully.

Chief Edwin was stunned, “Then what – what should we do now?”

“Is there anything that I can help you with?” Gu Fei asked a

cliché question.

“Who are you by the way?” Chief Edwin replied with a question.

“Well, I am...” Gu Fei was at a loss on how to reply to that, so he could only tell the truth, “Eddie sought me out for help.”

Chief Edwin’s eyes glowed, “Are you the chosen hero sought by Eddie to defeat the monster?”

Monster! Chosen hero! Sounds amazing! Gu Fei began to doubt if he could handle this quest at level 30. However, Chief Edwin’s question seemed as if it would determine whether Gu Fei could proceed with the quest or not. In any case, I can’t just quit the quest, as Gu Fei pondered on, he nodded shyly, “Yes, that’s me.”

“Welcome, oh, Chosen Hero!” NPCs sure were amazing, seeing how easily Chief Edwin recovered from his grief over Eddie’s death.

“Can you elaborate on what exactly is this ‘monster’ you just mentioned?” Gu Fei began to gather more information. He was thinking that he might still have a fighting chance if the ‘monster’ was a close-ranged type and had a similar speed. This was a game, after all; the monsters were designed to be killed by players. They would not be ludicrously strong compared to the players, right?

“Follow me!” Chief Edwin stepped outside and limped along the way. With his slow pace, Gu Fei and Xiaoyu could only patiently follow behind him. Gu Fei saw how thrilled Xiaoyu was, as if she was the one with the quest.

Bringing along the two, Chief Edwin arrived at the church of Yeguang Village.

The door of the church was in poor condition; half of it had fallen off the doorframe and was barely hanging on its hinges. The pavement in front of the door appeared to have been neglected for a long time, as weeds were growing out in-between the stone slabs. The two were walking alongside Chief Edwin on the pathway

paved with stones, when he stopped halfway and looked down on the ground.

“This right here...” Chief Edwin tapped on the ground with his walking cane, “Is Murphy’s bloodstain. Years of rain could not get rid of it entirely.”

Gu Fei and Xiaoyu lowered their heads and looked down. A dark stain could be seen on the stone slab Chief Edwin tapped on. According to him, it was caused by blood.

“What happened here?” Gu Fei asked.

“Werewolf!” Chief Edwin answered, “A Werewolf’s hiding in our village!”

Werewolf... Gu Fei thought to himself, Werewolves are ancient creatures that usually appeared in western folklore. They are humans that can shape-shift into their true forms during the full moon, losing their sanity and becoming vicious in the process. What’s more, werewolves that reveal their true forms are said to have heightened Attack and speed. This quest might be a tough egg to crack if they also possess incredible speed in this game.

As Gu Fei pondered on this, Chief Edwin busily babbled about the legend of Werewolves inside the game. Xiaoyu listened to him seriously, even taking out her little notebook to jot things down. Gu Fei’s ability to think things was faster than Chief Edwin’s chatter. After pondering through everything, he came back to the present just in time to hear Chief Edwin say, “According to legends, Werewolves are terrified of everything made of silver. Oh, chosen hero, do you have a weapon made of silver?”

“No,” Gu Fei answered.

“Worry not. For I have long prepared for this. Hand me your weapon, and I shall plate it with a layer of silver,” Chief Edwin said.

“Can I do that later? I am thinking of looking for more clues

about the Werewolves first,” Gu Fei said.

“You are welcome to find me any time the need arises,” Chief Edwin unsteadily tottered out of the church after he finished talking.

“Why didn’t you let him plate your weapon with silver?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Uhhh... I’m thinking of getting a saber or sword for that. A magic staff might not be able to harm the Werewolf seriously,” Gu Fei took out his magic staff and showed it to Xiaoyu, displaying its lack of a sharp edge.

Xiaoyu nodded her head and said, “Want to use my axe, instead?”

“I don’t think I can even wield it...” Gu Fei replied. Although the in-game equipment was not restricted to job classes and stats, there were still requirements that players needed to meet. It was just that these requirements were not listed properly in the form of data. For example, the official statement meant Mages were more than capable of equipping Xiaoyu’s huge axe, but wielding it was a different thing altogether. In a way, item usage was still dependent on a player’s stats; unfortunately, the crafty developers had chosen not to reveal how many stat points were needed to equip items for the different job classes.

“Oh. Then, let’s go buy a weapon you can wield!” Xiaoyu persuaded.

“I’ll just go on my own. Didn’t you mention earlier that you’re looking for someone living in that mansion to get gold ore or something? Why don’t you do that now? I’ll go over there to join you once I finish my purchase,” Gu Fei suggested.

“Okay!” Xiaoyu agreed, “See you later!” She waved her hand and headed toward the mansion near the church.

With Xiaoyu gone, Gu Fei quickly ran after Chief Edwin who was still on his way back. Gu Fei took out Flames of Baptism once he

had caught up to him, “Chief Edwin, please plate this sword with silver!”

While Gu Fei doubted that the ditzy Xiaoyu would recognize that the Flames of Baptism was the Masked Slayer’s weapon yesterday, he still decided to play it safe and not show her the weapon in the meantime.

Chief Edwin said nothing and took Flames of Baptism from Gu Fei. He pulled out a small vial of silver-colored liquid and poured it onto the blade of Flames of Baptism as he chanted arcane words, resulting in a silver glow. The overall color of the Flames of Baptism had not changed, but a thin silver coating could now be seen on the edge of the blade. Gu Fei, however, could not tell where it exactly was upon closer inspection.

“Oh, Chosen Hero, we are counting on you,” Chief Edwin returned the Flames of Baptism to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei focused his gaze on it. Flames of Baptism had been renamed as Sacred Flames of Baptism. There was now a new trait besides the 30% fire attack proc rate: nullify regeneration.

Chapter 61 - Traces in front of the Church

Nullify regeneration?

Gu Fei pondered about the effect of his Chinese broadsword's new trait. Werewolves were common folklore creatures, so their character design in-game should not stray too far from the original. He had never heard of werewolves having the ability to revive themselves, so 'nullify regeneration' might not necessarily mean the power to prevent Werewolves from reviving themselves. Eliminating that possibility, Gu Fei was sure that the term referred to the Werewolves' fast wound recovery. In gaming terms, that would be 'regeneration'.

Bosses that had regenerative abilities were a common sight in online games. "The damage I deal with one strike is less than the rate that the monster regenerates" was a description players usually used for this sort of bosses. Gu Fei figured that his Chinese broadsword's new trait should have that sort of effect.

Gu Fei headed toward Xiaoyu's location after bidding the village chief farewell. The door to the mansion was wide open, but Gu Fei saw no one inside. He sent Xiaoyu a message to ask for her whereabouts. Xiaoyu soon replied that she was retrieving gold ore from a cellar in the backyard, so he made his way there.

Could this mansion have a mine? Gu Fei arrived at the backyard and approached Xiaoyu who was standing beside the cellar's entrance.

"You managed to buy a weapon this fast?" Xiaoyu asked.

"I met a player selling equipment by chance," Gu Fei lied smoothly as he handed over the Sacred Flames of Baptism, "This weapon isn't half bad; it even adds magic damage! It's just right for me since I have low Strength." This was a cop-out Gu Fei had prepared from the beginning, as he would have to reveal the Chinese broadsword to Xiaoyu sooner or later, especially if he had

to join forces with her during a fight in the future. It was better to tell her upfront now, so she would assume that he had just purchased a sword and would not suspect anything. Gu Fei believed his lie to be foolproof, considering how simple-minded Xiaoyu was. Nevertheless, he still felt the slightest pang of guilt for lying to a straightforward girl like her.

Xiaoyu received the Chinese broadsword and look at it carefully. She indeed did not suspect a thing, “Truly not bad. How much did it cost you?”

“50 gold coins,” Gu Fei replied.

“That’s expensive!” Xiaoyu exclaimed.

“I didn’t have a choice since I want to carry on with the quest quickly! I’d rather buy that than waste time going all the way back to Yueye City. I would be upset if this quest had a time limit,” Gu Fei explained.

Xiaoyu nodded her head in agreement as she fully understood Gu Fei’s sentiment. Quest was the number one priority in-game no matter what! She returned Sacred Flames of Baptism to Gu Fei and said, “We’ll pay Chief Edwin another visit in a moment.”

“I’ve already visited him. This weapon’s name used to be Flames of Baptism; after Chief Edwin plated it with silver, its name changed to Sacred Flames of Baptism. It also has a new trait called ‘nullify regeneration’,” Gu Fei narrated.

“What does that mean?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Maybe, it prevents monsters from recovering HP!” Gu Fei said, unsure.

“Oh, I better write that down,” Xiaoyu took out her booklet and started to jot it down. Gu Fei did not know how to react to this, “It’s only my guess.”

Hearing his words, Xiaoyu wrote down: ‘nullify regeneration - prevents monsters from recovering HP’. She added ‘a guess’ beside

this line of words.

“Why are you just standing here?” Gu Fei asked.

“I’m waiting for that guy to retrieve the gold ore,” Xiaoyu pointed down the cellar.

Gu Fei peered into the cellar but only pitch darkness greeted his eyes. He could not make out a thing in the darkness. Could there really be a mine here? Gu Fei mumbled to himself. A cough traveled from the cellar as a person holding a small bag climbed up the wooden stairs.

The person coming out of the cellar was no doubt a NPC. His hideous face displayed a broad smile similar to that of a pesky in-game merchant’s. This was obviously Mr. Adrian, the wealthiest man in Yeguang Village.

Mr. Adrian emerged from the cellar and threw a small bag to Xiaoyu. Gu Fei looked inside the bag and saw that it was filled with unrefined gold ore of various sizes.

“Is your quest completed now?” Gu Fei asked.

“It’ll be completed once I take this back to Yunduan City,” Xiaoyu answered.

“What’s the reward?” Gu Fei questioned.

“Don’t know yet,” Xiaoyu replied.

Xiaoyu’s quest was not the slightest difficult, only requiring her to travel far. But the amount of time spent to do it was enough to frustrate anybody, so it would be disappointing if the reward was just a paltry sum.

“I’m done with my quest, so I’ll help you with yours,” Xiaoyu said as she put the small bag into her dimensional pocket and patted it.

Gu Fei nodded his head as he looked all around. “Don’t know who that werewolf could be,” he said, feeling rather helpless.

“Let’s ask around! Questing is all about talking to NPCs until you’ve exhausted all their conversation options and finding the clue within their words,” Xiaoyu lectured Gu Fei.

It was somewhat tedious. Although Yeguang Village was not large, many NPCs still lived in it. From east to west of the village, Gu Fei had asked about twenty different NPCs, excluding the ones who completely ignored him. In the end, the only answer he got was, “The village chief knows more about this....”

Gu Fei and Xiaoyu listlessly made their way once more to Chief Edwin’s hut. Chief Edwin just repeated his previous monologue, which covered the general introduction to Werewolves and their connection to the full moon.

The game indeed had a day-and-night cycle. Six hours would constitute a full day in Parallel World, with four hours being daytime and two hours being nighttime. At nighttime, the darkness was not bad to the point where players could not even make out their five fingers. It was stated that the moon provided players light, allowing them to see the roads or identify the monsters. And yet, Gu Fei had never concerned himself with the phases of the moon in-game.

Xiaoyu was unaware of it as well. Gu Fei looked at the time. The two had crossed the Oolong Mountain Range at around daybreak, so it was more or less three hours since then. Meaning, it would be nighttime in an hour. There was a possibility that the system would initiate the full moon phase to suit Gu Fei’s quest.

“Let’s go to the church again and take another look around the rocks, tall grass, and such. We might find something that will reveal the Werewolf’s identity,” Xiaoyu suggested.

Gu Fei thought that her suggestion sounded reasonable. Logically speaking, any such items should have long been found by the other villagers. But for the sake of the quests that players needed to solve, those items would be left untouched for them to find.

They returned to the blood-stained stone slab near the church's doorstep. Xiaoyu immediately sprawled on the ground and carefully checked the area. Gu Fei felt a little conflicted. If this was part of the quest design, then clues pertaining to it could only be found by the quest-holder. Could Xiaoyu find anything by sprawling on the ground like this?

Seeing how enthusiastic she was to help him, Gu Fei could not bear to be a wet blanket and got on all fours as well. He started searching the ground just like Xiaoyu.

Gu Fei stood up in front of the church's battered door after searching the ground for a full round and coming up with nothing. In contrast, Xiaoyu was relentless and even increased her search radius to include a far corner.

Gu Fei stared at the area he had just searched. The two had practically combed every blade of grass and overturned each slab of stone, yet the system restored everything back to how it was after a bit.

This was how the game usually worked. Anything the players moved or touched would be restored to its original state barring special conditions; but if a NPC did the moving, the system would view it as an internal reshuffling and would never revert back the changes made.

At this moment, Gu Fei watched as the scenery reverted back to its original state from where he was standing and felt stunned.

He was unsure if it was part of the design or a clue specially left behind, but he could see some remnants on the ground of a past battle.

The broken stone slabs, the trodden grass blades, the broken shrubbery... were definitely not naturally formed. This place must have borne the brunt of a battle.

Gu Fei stepped down from the elevated platform and went over

to inspect these traces in detail. Scenes from a battle would occasionally flash through his mind.

Gu Fei concluded that these battle traces were the real deal. He did not believe that this scene could be produced through programming or drawing. This place must have been created without these battle remnants. Afterward, an intense battle had been fought here, leaving the traces behind. In the end, they became what he was seeing right now.

However, it seemed rather ludicrous to utilize this as a quest clue. Gu Fei doubted if the average player could discern this. Even the game designer might not be able to recognize that a battle had once taken place here from the marks alone.

Gu Fei himself was not able to do so that well. He could only extrapolate that the battle had been fought fiercely with swift and frequent attacks. Gu Fei soon had many questions circulating his mind. The indications suggested that the two parties had fought for quite a while before one of them succumbed. By the looks of things, it seemed as if Murphy was quite the brawler. Gu Fei, however, recalled that Chief Edwin had described Murphy as a kind, righteous young lad. There was no mention of him being a fighter of sorts.

Gu Fei instantly remembered the official website's statement regarding chain quests. It stated that every generated chain quest in Parallel World represented the game creation team's blood, sweat, and tears, with complete storylines and plots happening in real-time all around the players....

Based on this statement, unbeknown to the players, the system had simulated Murphy's death by the Werewolf using all the necessary events in real time. It then sequenced the plot accordingly, including Eddie's capture by the Mountain Bandits. All of this happened in the game in real time and was not merely a backstory.

Murphy's identity had suddenly become dubious. Ironically enough, Gu Fei's doubts were centered on whether Murphy truly existed or not. Had the programmers thrown two random NPCs to fight by the church entrance and faked everything for the sake of the plot? If that was the case, Gu Fei, who had managed to determine the traces of the battle, was thoroughly fooled.

Whatever the case might be, Gu Fei had decided to treat this discovery as a clue and continue upon the trail. He promptly called back Xiaoyu who was still digging in a corner.

"Did you find anything?" Xiaoyu was audibly excited.

"There's something. We're going to visit Chief Edwin again," Gu Fei answered.

"What for?"

"To ask him exactly who Murphy was," Gu Fei replied.

Chapter 62 - The Missing Murphy

Gu Fei and Xiaoyu left the church and visited Chief Edwin once more.

“Chief Edwin, how was Murphy, the one killed by the Werewolf, as a person?” Gu Fei got straight to the point.

“Murphy was a kind-hearted, virtuous lad. He was loved by the villagers, so many were saddened by his death,” Chief Edwin commiserated.

Gu Fei specifically asked him about Murphy’s fighting skills, yet the latter only repeated his previous words.

“Where is Murphy buried?” Gu Fei asked.

“He is buried in a graveyard behind the hill south of the village. It is where all the dead villagers are interred,” Chief Edwin answered.

After inquiring about all this, Gu Fei and Xiaoyu strode out of Chief Edwin’s house. They quickly headed to a general store in the village, bought a metal shovel there, and made their way to the graveyard’s location.

“What are we doing next?” asked Xiaoyu as she eyed the shovel. Although Xiaoyu was a natural airhead, she was still able to guess what Gu Fei planned to do.

“Dig a grave,” Gu Fei replied honestly.

“Why are we doing that?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Murphy’s character seems a little fishy to me,” Gu Fei answered.

“What’s fishy about his character?” Xiaoyu curiously asked.

“He seemed to be great at fighting, yet the village chief doesn’t know about it,” Gu Fei answered.

“Then, how do you know about it?” Xiaoyu continued inquiring.

“Uhhh... It’s just a hunch,” Gu Fei said to her simply, as he did not know how to explain his intuition.

“Oh...” Xiaoyu actually accepted such a vague answer.

Xiaoyu was apparently not afraid to do anything for the sake of questing, as the idea of exhuming a corpse did not even illicit a shred of fear in her. The two arrived at the graveyard by the southern hill. After finding Murphy’s engraved name on one of the tombstones, they began digging close to it alternately.

A brown coffin was soon unearthed before their eyes. Gu Fei stuck his shovel into the gap between the lid and the coffin and called Xiaoyu for help.

The Strength-based Xiaoyu reached out for the lid and pulled it up. The cap was easily separated from the casket. Thinking that it had something gruesome inside, Gu Fei immediately covered Xiaoyu’s eyes with his hands as he scanned the contents of the coffin.

“I’m not afraid of seeing a corpse!” Xiaoyu peeled off Gu Fei’s hands from her eyes and peered into the coffin as well, “Eh? Why’s it empty?”

Gu Fei fell deep in his thoughts.

“Did they get lazy making the game?” Xiaoyu asked.

“I don’t think so. If they hadn’t bothered with the details, they wouldn’t have buried this coffin here in the first place. Since they even designed the coffin, it wouldn’t be difficult for them to place a skeleton or corpse inside, right? There must be a reason why it’s like this,” Gu Fei analyzed.

“Maybe, Murphy isn’t truly dead?” Xiaoyu suggested.

“That...” Gu Fei agreed, “...Or someone stole the corpse.”

“Why steal it?” Xiaoyu asked.

“I don’t know. Maybe, there’s a secret inside the corpse,” Gu Fei

answered tentatively.

“So what do we do now?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Now we wait,” Gu Fei answered.

“Wait for what?” Xiaoyu questioned.

“If unearthing this coffin is not part of the quest, it will revert back to its original buried state. But if it’s actually part of the quest plot, it will return under the ground only after we complete the quest,” Gu Fei explained.

Xiaoyu was dumbfounded after hearing this. Gu Fei laughed, “When all is said and done, Parallel World’s quests were made by the game design team. It’s like we’re interacting with these quest designers when we’re doing a quest or intermingling with any NPCs as part of a quest. So when doing difficult quests like this, it’s beneficial for us to try and understand their thought process.”

Xiaoyu displayed a look of distress for some time until she finally blurted out, “I don’t even know what they’re thinking about!”

Gu Fei chuckled, “I don’t as well. It’s just a hunch.”

The two waited by Murphy’s grave for a few minutes, and it did not revert back to its original state. Gu Fei confirmed his guess. Murphy’s identity was truly shrouded in mystery.

Meanwhile, Ye Xiaowu was feeling bored, so he decided to activate the monitoring room’s tracker for Gu Fei to watch the latter’s progress in the chain quest. As for the monitoring team members’ accusation about the activity being “against the rule”, Ye Xiaowu had given them the excuse of Gu Fei being “the first player to obtain a chain quest, so I need to observe him for a while. I need to check if there’s any problem with the chain quest”. Actually, Gu Fei was not the only player to have fortuitously obtained a chain quest. Ye Xiaowu chose to watch Gu Fei purely because he was interested in his gameplay.

However, Gu Fei’s quest progress had left him astounded.

Completing a chain quest was not just about reaching its end in a straightforward manner; many different routes existed in-between the start and the finish. These numerous routes were of course created by the game designers to provide players a myriad of ways to attain quest completion, as well as to account for the players' different levels, job classes, and skills. Ye Xiaowu already had a deep understanding of Gu Fei's in-game character. So when he simulated the quest using Gu Fei's in-game character, Ye Xiaowu discovered that he would get stuck at certain portions of it whichever route he took. The jam was due to the in-game character's level or skill limitation, and neither could be solved by relying on wits alone.

With all these in mind, Ye Xiaowu waited to see Gu Fei's expression as he got stumped on the quest. He almost burst out laughing when Gu Fei and Xiaoyu got on all fours and searched for clues on the ground by the church. However, this feeling of schadenfreude only lasted for a short while before it was replaced by surprise. The pair seemed to have actually found something, as they got up from the ground and rushed over to Chief Edwin's hut in the next moment. They even proceeded to dig up Murphy's grave afterward.

'Murphy' was indeed a possible route, and picking up a trail by the church was another. However, 'Murphy' could definitely not be triggered by searching the ground like what Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had just done. The method that Ye Xiaowu knew to trigger it was absolutely not doable for those two. And yet, it seemed as if they had managed to stumble upon the very same route.

Ye Xiaowu really wanted to listen to the two's discussion, but the monitoring system had the audio turned off. After all, conversations between players might have private content. They would only be able to listen in on the players' talks by turning the audio on. However, neither Ye Xiaowu nor the monitoring team had permission to do so without the higher-ups' clearance.

Ye Xiaowu and the pair by the graveyard were filled with doubts as they mulled over different things. Ye Xiaowu suddenly realized that a level 30 player should not even be able to trigger the chain quest's requirement of meeting Eddie in the first place. And yet, Gu Fei had done exactly that. Was there a way to progress in this chain quest that they had overlooked while designing it?

In Parallel World, Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had left the graveyard and were now talking to Chief Edwin once more.

The village chief showed surprise when they informed him of the missing corpse, yet he did not introduce a new conversation topic to them.

It was getting dark when they left Chief Edwin's hut. With the four-hour daytime over, nighttime was upon them in the blink of an eye. Gu Fei looked up at the moon in the night sky; would there be a full moon tonight?

If there was a full moon tonight, where would the Werewolf appear?

Gu Fei thought of the church and hurriedly ran toward it with Xiaoyu in tow.

Moonlight finally descended. Sadly, there was not a full moon tonight. If the moon in Parallel World had phases, then tonight was definitely not a night of a full moon.

"Xiaoyu, can you see what shape the moon has?" Gu Fei asked Xiaoyu. He suspected that the night sky he was seeing while on his quest would be different from what the other players were seeing.

"Do you have myopia?" Xiaoyu raised her head as she asked, before replying, "It's a crescent moon."

It's the same, Gu Fei muttered to himself. Today was not a day when the Werewolf would transform.

The dilapidated church appeared very desolate under the night sky. It would serve as a great crime scene for a murder! Gu Fei

sighed. At this moment, a shadowy figure suddenly scampered from outside the decrepit wall.

“Who’s there?!” Gu Fei shouted instinctively as he pulled out the Sacred Flames of Baptism, ready to strike.

The shadowy figure had already rushed toward him, however.

“Werewolf!” Xiaoyu exclaimed. Her voice did not quake when facing such a terrifying creature; instead, she showed exhilaration, “The Werewolf appeared!”

The game design team would definitely cry if they saw this. They constructed such a terrifying scene, yet it got completely ignored by this lady. She’s so ditzy she even forgot what fear is, Gu Fei thought to himself. He raised his Chinese broadsword and dashed toward the shadow, delivering a cut.

It was indeed a Werewolf.

The Werewolf’s body structure was huge and bulky. Its pair of eyes glowed green as its front paws clawed toward Gu Fei. Spittle from the Werewolf’s jaws flew everywhere as the moonlight ominously reflected off its razor sharp teeth.

The Werewolf dodged in mid-air Gu Fei’s first slash, as its front paws continued to swipe at him with unbridled ferocity. Gu Fei was close enough to smell the monster’s rancid breath.

Gu Fei quickly held the Chinese broadsword firmly to his side, parrying the incoming swipe from the Werewolf.

With a whoosh, Gu Fei flew backward from the impact.

It’s too fast! Gu Fei exclaimed in his head. The Werewolf’s speed was definitely as fast as how he had imagined it would be. It was almost on par with the speed a Warrior’s Cyclone could attain. This made Gu Fei use the same method he had employed when dealing with Xiaoyu’s Cyclone back then. Luckily, his weapon did not break this time. The blade of his Chinese broadsword was facing outward, and the Werewolf’s attack was not made using a

weapon but its paws; as a result, the Werewolf was injured by the force behind its swipe.

Isaac Newton's third law of motion: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction!

Gu Fei was thrown onto the ground, and his HP dropped a bit from the resulting impact. Had the swipe fully connected, Gu Fei would have surely been insta-killed there and then.

Xiaoyu stared intently at the Werewolf, as she dashed forward with her axe raised to hack at it.

"Don't!" Gu Fei hurriedly shouted. He and Xiaoyu were originally standing together. The Werewolf would have been capable of pouncing on the two of them had that been its original intention. It was only because Gu Fei was the quest-holder that it had focused on attacking him. So although the Werewolf ignored Xiaoyu, that did not mean that it would continue to do so if she struck it.

Unfortunately, Xiaoyu could no longer stop her forward sprint at this point in time due to inertia. But before she could close in the distance, the Werewolf had already emitted a low growl and leaped over a wall to escape.

"Did I scare it away?" Xiaoyu was dumbfounded.

Gu Fei quickly chased after the Werewolf over the wall, yet no traces of it could be seen.

"It's injured," Gu Fei returned to Xiaoyu's side and squatted as he touched the few drops of blood on the ground.

"Did you see what's on its neck?" Gu Fei asked Xiaoyu.

Xiaoyu shook her head.

"Do werewolves even wear collars like dogs?" Gu Fei mumbled to himself. As the Werewolf was running away, he had noticed an item hanging around its neck.

Chapter 63 - One Truth Prevails

“Did we mistake a regular wolfhound for the Werewolf?” Xiaoyu asked.

“That’s... highly unlikely,” Gu Fei believed that the chain quests’ complex design was something that the developers were very proud; hence, they would never incorporate such a ludicrous concept to any of those quests. Instead of being a real werewolf, it was actually a wolfhound with sentience? That was just plain silly.

“Let’s see if it has left any other trails of blood,” Gu Fei suggested.

“Good idea! We can catch up to it by following the blood trail!” Xiaoyu exclaimed.

“Uhh... It was scratched once on its claw. Wouldn’t it be too far-fetched for it to bleed that much?” Gu Fei rationalized.

“Who knows?” Xiaoyu asked rhetorically, as she began to search around once more.

As for Gu Fei, he stared intently at the few drops of blood on the ground.

The Werewolf was far stronger than what Gu Fei had anticipated. It was unusually fast and possessed high attack power. Gu Fei only managed to block its single attack even though he had tried his best. He had no chance of winning at all if he were to engage the Werewolf in a real fight. Ultimately, it was inevitable for there to be a gap in terms of strength between the bosses and players. Even if Gu Fei wanted to, he had no way of bridging the gap between them with his skills alone. The Werewolf would most likely be done with Gu Fei in just two or three strikes before he could even observe its attack patterns and grasp the loopholes within.

Still, why would such a powerful boss flee? Was a mere scratch on its claw all it took to frighten the ferocious Werewolf? This was far too ridiculous. Or was the Sacred Flames of Baptism that

fearsome after being plated with silver? Was the Werewolf so stricken with terror once it noticed that the weapon had been coated with silver?

Evidently, the escape of the Werewolf was not something that it decided on its own. Rather, it was a scenario that the game designers had come up with beforehand. Gu Fei just happened to fulfill the condition that led to the Werewolf's escape.

The 'condition' seemed to be injuring the Werewolf.

Just what kind of message was such a scenario trying to convey? Gu Fei could not fathom it at the moment.

"There's no other blood trail," Xiaoyu said disappointedly after searching the nearby surroundings through and through.

"Let's go to where the village chief is, I have some more things to ask," Gu Fei said.

"Is that so? Let's go, let's go!"

It was quiet over in Yeguang Village under the night sky. The NPCs that had earlier been roaming about were nowhere to be seen; instead, there were now houses with lit windows. Whereas the players were active inside the game twenty-four seven, the NPCs were bounded by their programmed daily schedule: being active at daytime and resting at nighttime. At times like this, telling who the humans and who the NPCs were was amusingly hard.

When they knocked on Chief Edwin's door, he politely greeted them like how he always did. "Ah, Chosen Hero, you are here again," Chief Edwin kept on addressing Gu Fei as the 'Chosen Hero'.

"The Werewolf that killed Murphy... What does it look like? Does it wear anything on its neck?" Gu Fei asked.

"Oh, you'll have to ask Mr. Adrian about that. He's the guy who lives near the church, and the sole witness of that past incident. He

heard sounds coming from the church that night, so he went over to investigate and witnessed the Werewolf killing Murphy. That poor man; he must have been traumatized,” Chief Edwin said.

“Mr. Adrian...” Gu Fei recalled him as the wealthiest man in Yeguang Village.

“Chief, where’s Murphy house?” Gu Fei asked again.

“It’s the third house by the woods. No one has gone there ever since he died,” Chief Edwin answered.

“Let’s go there for a look,” Gu Fei said to Xiaoyu.

Murphy’s house was actually very easy to find, as it was the only one with no lit windows among the houses. No one lived there ever since Murphy passed away.

As they drew closer to Murphy’s house, Gu Fei gently blocked Xiaoyu, who was behind him, and signaled her to keep quiet. He then carefully walked toward the house as he held Sacred Flames of Baptism in front of him.

Xiaoyu felt so nervous that she dared not exhale, although she was clueless as to what Gu Fei was doing. She only saw Gu Fei walking up to the door, sticking his ear on it as he listened for quite a while, and pushing the door open. Xiaoyu inspected her surroundings nervously before sneakily going inside along with Gu Fei.

Gu Fei had already lit up an oil lamp inside the house and stood near a bed, looking at a parchment in his hand.

“What is it?” Xiaoyu got close to him.

“Seems like a map to me,” Gu Fei answered.

“Treasure map?!” Xiaoyu felt thrilled.

“Too bad there’re no coordinates on it. It might be a little tricky to locate it!” Gu Fei said.

“Let me see it,” Xiaoyu took it.

“This right here is the main street of the village, and over here looks to be the church...” Xiaoyu pointed at the parchment with her quill and started to mumble.

“I know where it is!” Xiaoyu declared happily after a while. But when she turned around, she saw that Gu Fei was standing by the door and peeking outside warily.

“What are you looking at?” Xiaoyu inched closer to him.

“Shhhh...” Gu Fei gestured her to keep her voice down. Even though NPCs were currently outside, Gu Fei was not sure if ‘making too much noise’ would be one of the condition to cancel their current actions.

“Come on, let’s trail after them,” Gu Fei pulled Xiaoyu.

“I found the treasure spot!” Xiaoyu waved the parchment wildly.

“Really nice; we’ll go treasure hunting later. For now let’s trail these four fellows,” Gu Fei said.

“Why? Are they up to something?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Not sure... But I recognized the three among the four as the NPCs that kept on avoiding me. I have never seen the fourth guy before. They are definitely up to something,” Gu Fei said.

“Let’s go, let’s go!” Xiaoyu excitedly said.

The four people walked silently on the main street of Yeguang Village, resting on their shoulders were something that seemed like shovels.

“Uh-oh, don’t tell me they’re going to dig treasures! Could they be planning to dig the treasure shown on this map?” Xiaoyu said.

“Didn’t you already figure out the treasure spot of that parchment? See if the path they are taking now leads to that treasure or not,” Gu Fei said.

“It’s not the right way,” Xiaoyu replied.

“Then, let’s keep on trailing them.”

The four NPCs eventually reached a little hill near the village. They disappeared somewhere in the middle of it after pushing away a layer of plants blocking their way.

“Look, what’s that?” Xiaoyu pointed at something.

“That’s a shaft...” Gu Fei answered.

“What are they doing inside?” Xiaoyu asked.

“How am I supposed to know?” Gu Fei replied.

“Shall we take a look?” Xiaoyu suggested.

“Don’t be so hasty! Let’s wait until morning before going in. They’ll surely leave in the morning,” Gu Fei said.

“How do you know that?” Xiaoyu asked.

“These NPCs need to be in their position inside the village during the day,” Gu Fei answered.

Xiaoyu looked at the time, “There’s still more than an hour left!”

“Then, let’s go through the spot that you’ve figured out earlier,” Gu Fei said, “Where is it?”

“The woods behind Murphy’s house.”

The two returned to Murphy’s house and entered the woods behind it. Xiaoyu led the way with the parchment in her hand, looking around and finally stopping under a tree. “It’s here,” Xiaoyu pointed.

“This iron shovel is well worth the money,” Gu Fei mumbled as he took the iron shovel out and began digging.

“Treasure chest! Treasure chest! Treasure chest!” Xiaoyu chanted as she saw the pit got dug deeper and deeper. However, what appeared in the end was not a treasure chest but a burlap sack.

“So heavy!” Gu Fei grabbed the sack with his two hands, yet he was still unable to pull it out from the pit he had dug.

“Allow me,” Xiaoyu came forward. The burlap sack was pulled out from the pit as she lightly grabbed on to it. Once again, Gu Fei felt depressed at the sight.

The two were stunned as they opened the burlap sack and looked inside.

“Gold?” They looked at each other.

Xiaoyu took out the small bag of gold ore from her own quest. She compared a piece of gold from her bag with the one inside the burlap sack.

“They look so much alike!” Xiaoyu remarked.

“Mr. Adrian, huh?” Gu Fei was deep in thought.

“Let’s return this gold to him. There must be a reward,” Xiaoyu felt delighted.

“Did you receive a quest related to this sack of gold?” Gu Fei asked.

“No.”

“Then, why would there be a reward when there’s no quest?” Gu Fei stated matter-of-factly.

“What are these gold ore for, then?”

“I’m thinking that it might be an important aspect of my chain quest,” Gu Fei was feeling vexed, “Things just go on and on. I am tired; let’s take a break!”

“Where to?” Xiaoyu asked.

“The village Inn should still be open for business. Let’s head there to rest and wait until morning,” Gu Fei said.

The two headed to the Inn. It was a game after all, so there was no such thing as ‘closing time’ for the system-operated shops.

“Order any drinks you want. It’s my treat,” Gu Fei said.

“I feel sleepy all of a sudden... I’m taking a nap,” Xiaoyu lay down

on the table as soon as she finished speaking.

Gu Fei randomly ordered a glass of drink. While drinking on, he pondered about his chain quest...

Two groups of village NPCs treated him differently;

Traces of a fight in front of the church;

Murphy's strong yet unknown fighting capabilities;

The missing corpse of Murphy;

The Werewolf that fled from just a light injury;

Murphy's hidden sack of gold;

And finally, the NPC villagers that went to a shaft late at night.

There must be a story timeline that could explain all these events clearly, which would display the chronological order of the entire storyline behind the 'Eddie's Mission' quest. Gu Fei doubted that everything could be solved by simply finding the Werewolf and killing it. Currently, Gu Fei had an idea of what he was supposed to do. He just needed to wait until morning. The whole thing would be revealed once he made sure of a few crucial things.

Meanwhile, Ye Xiaowu who had been observing Gu Fei as if he was watching a movie was utterly blown away by how Gu Fei carried out his quest.

From what Ye Xiaowu observed, Gu Fei was roaming about in front of the church when he suddenly ran off to unearth Murphy's grave. Ye Xiaowu still did not know whether Gu Fei had figured something out or simply taken a wild guess.

He actually managed to fend off the Werewolf's assault... He's only at level 30! A mere slap from that Werewolf can kill a level 30 player....

If the situation continued to unfold at the current pace, Gu Fei might be able to achieve a completion rating of 90% or above for his chain quest.

Completion rating. This was how the game measured how well a player did for a chain quest; this same criterion was used to determine the value of the final reward for players as well.

Killing the Werewolf? That was only one of the many ways to complete the chain quest. For example, if Ye Xiaowu was the one doing the quest, he could complete it simply by going to where the Werewolf was and killing it with a single blow. This was because he knew the whereabouts of the Werewolf. However, he would get the lowest completion rating and the worst kind of reward.

The way to get the highest completion rating was to unravel the entire storyline behind the chain quest and leave no stone unturned, presenting everything clearly.

This was akin to a standalone game with multiple endings; every ending could be considered clearing the game and beating it, but only one true ending would be considered as the perfect ending.

As the great kid detective Conan once said, “One truth prevails!”

Chapter 64 - Werewolf or Wolfman

Gu Fei drank liquor all by himself. The sight of Xiaoyu sleeping deeply closeby induced drowsiness in him. Eating and drinking in Parallel World was truly just a sensory experience; the players' real bodies would not be affected by consuming anything in-game at all. Although sleeping in-game slightly eased the tiredness of a player's body, sleeping in reality was the only way for a person to recover fully from fatigue. Therefore, sleeping in-game when players were feeling tired was ill-advised, as going offline and simply getting into a real bed would be much better.

Looking around, Gu Fei discovered that the Inn was empty. Yeguang Village not only was far from Yueye City but also lacked any ideal grinding maps nearby. These factors explained why hardly any players could be seen resting in the Inn. Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had made several rounds in the Inn and all they saw coming and going were NPCs and more NPCs.

Sleeping in the game was not a solution, but staying awake was not good either. Out of boredom, Gu Fei stood up and began practicing his bladework in a corner of the Inn. He got out his magic staff and practiced his techniques for it. He ended his practice session with a set of hand-to-hand combat moves upon seeing that the sky had finally brightened.

"Wake up! Wake up!" Gu Fei nudged Xiaoyu.

"Is it already morning?" Xiaoyu still looked somewhat sleepy.

"Yup," Gu Fei answered.

"Lemme just lay down for five more minutes..." Xiaoyu collapsed back onto the table again.

"Quest," Gu Fei reminded.

"Let's go, let's go! Time waits for no man!" Xiaoyu immediately perked up. She got up from the table and said to Gu Fei, "Look

lively!”

The two left the Inn and headed to the hillside where they had ended their tailing last night. Since they had noted the coordinates before, the two managed to locate the shaft easily despite everywhere around them looking identical. Seeing that there was no one around, Gu Fei pushed off the large mound of vegetation that hid the shaft’s entrance.

The shaft’s pathway was not as large or as complex as Oolong Cave. In just a few steps, they found themselves in the deepest part of it in what looked like a big room. Gu Fei picked up the bits of loose rocks on the ground and touched the walls.

This medium-sized shaft was actually a gold mine. The gold ore that Mr. Adrian had given Xiaoyu and the sack of gold ore that they had found behind Murphy’s house seemed to have originated from this place...

This mine shaft and the sack of gold ore at Murphy’s place... Were they all related to Mr. Adrian?

Gu Fei had not forgotten that Xiaoyu’s gold ore quest involving Mr. Adrian was unrelated to his chain quest. Gu Fei and Xiaoyu being together, as well as Xiaoyu obtaining the quest that had led to Gu Fei’s discovery of Mr. Adrian’s secret gold mine, was purely coincidental. If all these serendipitous events had not occurred, Gu Fei would never have connected Mr. Adrian to the gold mine here.

“What’s this?” As Gu Fei was pondering about those events, Xiaoyu found an urn in a corner of the shaft.

By the time Gu Fei walked over, Xiaoyu had already unsealed the urn. She grabbed a handful of the grayish powder within and showed it up to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei narrowed his eyes, “These are bone ashes.”

“Bone ashes?” Xiaoyu felt shocked.

“The cremated remains of a person or animal,” Gu Fei said as he

mentally prepared himself for Xiaoyu's inevitable scream as she threw the urn away.

But Xiaoyu remained unaffected, merely asking, "Whose is it?"

"Only one person is dead in this village," Gu Fei hinted.

"So this is Murphy's?" Xiaoyu asked.

Gu Fei nodded his head, "Someone dug out Murphy's corpse and burned it into ashes."

"Why would anyone do that?" Xiaoyu asked.

"Maybe... Murphy is a Werewolf," Gu Fei surmised.

"Ah? So Murphy did not get murdered; he actually committed suicide!" Xiaoyu concluded.

Gu Fei laughed as he shook his head, "Various questions could be answered if Murphy was truly a Werewolf. This would explain how he was able to trade blows with another Werewolf, and why the villagers do not know about his fighting capabilities. This would also explain why his buried remains were dug out to be cremated."

"What does that mean?"

"According to western folklores, a lycanthrope corpse can transform into a zombie vampire. Someone must have cremated his remains to prevent that from happening," Gu Fei explained.

"So who cremated him?" Xiaoyu asked.

"His kin. Only a lycanthrope kin would know of Murphy's real identity and would worry about his corpse transforming," Gu Fei answered.

"Could that kin be the same Werewolf that had killed Murphy?" Xiaoyu wondered.

"Perhaps. But finding his cremated remains here proves something," Gu Fei stated.

“What?”

“All those who come to this mine to extract gold ore are Werewolves. I suspect that the villagers that have been avoiding me are actually Werewolves,” Gu Fei deduced.

“Ha! See, I told you!” Xiaoyu said smugly.

Gu Fei showed her a forced smile, “You’re really smart.”

Xiaoyu felt overjoyed, “Told you I’m a quest expert!”

“No kidding!”

“So what’s our next move?” Xiaoyu asked.

“This bunch of Werewolves is living among humans and seems to have no intentions of hurting them. Their goal here seems to be this gold mine. This shaft isn’t large, so it can probably fit in four people at once when they’re mining. I assume that four of them come here to mine gold ore every night. Murphy must have harbored ill-intention that prompted him to secretly stash away some gold ore for himself. The others probably killed him upon discovering what he had been doing. I think that’s the gist of things,” Gu Fei explained.

“Werewolves are truly greedy creatures...” Xiaoyu commented.

“With so many Werewolves, I don’t think this quest wants me to kill all of them off. There must be another way to resolve this,” Gu Fei said as he pondered about it.

“Like what?” Xiaoyu queried.

“I’m not sure yet... We’ll decide our next step after identifying the Werewolf that assaulted us yesterday,” Gu Fei answered.

“You know who it is?”

Gu Fei laughed, “I managed to cut its right hand back then. Since my silver-coated Chinese broadsword has the additional trait of nullifying regeneration, that Werewolf’s wound won’t recover so soon. This must be a method that the system gave me to locate the

Werewolf!”

“So anyone whose right hand bears an injury is the Werewolf?” Xiaoyu asked.

“That’s right.”

“Then, let’s go!”

After covering the shaft’s entrance, the duo headed back to the village.

The NPCs in the village were all at their designated positions. Gu Fei hesitated; he did not know how the NPCs would react if he suddenly grabbed their right hands one by one to check for a wound. After a moment of contemplation, Gu Fei decided to be sneaky about conducting his inspection instead. Fortunately, Parallel World’s NPCs had a habit of gesturing with their hands while talking. As Xiaoyu engaged these NPCs in a conversation, Gu Fei used that opportunity to observe their hands from the sidelines.

In the end, the villagers that had been avoiding Gu Fei, whom he suspected to be Werewolves, did not sport a single wound on their right hands.

“How can this be...” Gu Fei was dumbfounded.

“Did we miss anyone?” Xiaoyu asked.

Gu Fei had asked Chief Edwin for the total population of Yeguang Village. By his current estimation, they had not missed anyone. Each of these NPCs was out in broad daylight!

“Let’s go look over everyone, then!” Xiaoyu suggested.

“Looks like that’s the only way,” Gu Fei listlessly accepted Xiaoyu’s dumb recommendation.

The last bunch of villagers responded to Gu Fei. But after going through these NPCs, not one of them had a wounded hand.

“Why is that Werewolf so hard to find?” Xiaoyu asked in

frustration.

“Now, only one person is left...” Gu Fei stated.

“Who?”

“Mr. Adrian,” Gu Fei replied. Everyone in the village was bustling about the place, except for Mr. Adrian who had not left his mansion by the church.

“Oh, yeah!” Xiaoyu nodded, “He has gold ore as well. Anyone who has that is a Werewolf!”

“That might not be the case. He’s the wealthiest man in the village. He might just have bought the gold ore from the Werewolves. Let’s go find him before we speak more of this.”

As soon as the two arrived at Mr. Adrian’s mansion, Xiaoyu, who had gotten used to them visiting people’s houses, immediately knocked on the door. However, no one answered.

Is that NPC not at home as well? Gu Fei felt annoyed.

“Maybe he’s in the cellar in the backyard,” Xiaoyu said.

When they arrived in the backyard, they saw that the cellar doors were locked tightly. Mr. Adrian could not possibly be inside.

Just as they were about to return to the front door, Gu Fei and Xiaoyu coincidentally saw Mr. Adrian returning home from being out. Gu Fei hurriedly called his name.

“Oh, Chosen Hero,” The wealthiest person in the village sure was different, treating Gu Fei with utmost respect unlike the other villagers.

“I heard you saw the Werewolf that killed Murphy,” Gu Fei began.

Mr. Adrian’s expression immediately showed fear, “That was truly a terrifying night.” Saying so, he started describing the spine-chilling appearance of the Werewolf.

“Was Murphy dead by then?” Gu Fei asked.

“Yes, that poor lad,” Mr. Adrian sighed.

“Did you see how the Werewolf killed him?” Gu Fei pressed on.

“No. He was already dead by the time I arrived. The Werewolf left very quickly, too,” Mr. Adrian answered.

Gu Fei thanked him, which Mr. Adrian very happily accepted. He stepped aside to let Gu Fei and Xiaoyu be on their way.

“His right hand doesn’t seem to be injured,” Xiaoyu said.

“No,” Gu Fei nodded. He was feeling downcast, having not expected this method to fail. Nevertheless, he had gleaned some new information after exchanging words with Mr. Adrian.

Murphy would have to transform into a Werewolf for him to fight with another Werewolf. Therefore, he should still be in his lycanthrope form when he died. Instead, Mr. Adrian and the villagers who hurried over saw a human corpse? No one could cause a Werewolf to change his form besides the Werewolf himself.

Meaning, Murphy had known that he could not defeat the other Werewolf, so he used his remaining strength to turn back into a human being instead. He would rather die than let the villagers find out his identity as a lycanthrope. What was the meaning of this? Was it out of kindness? Was he abandoning his inner darkness? Or was he a wolf with a man’s heart? Did that mean he was actually not a Werewolf but a Wolfman instead?

“THIS IS SO FRUSTRATING!” Gu Fei bellowed toward the sky. This chain quest had left him mentally exhausted. Just when Gu Fei thought he had made a breakthrough discovery, he realized that he was not on the right route at all.

He looked ahead and saw a lone NPC right before him. It was the same NPC that had sneakily mined gold ore last night. G*dd*mn*t! What’s the point of beating around the bush with a bunch of AIs

created by the system? Questing is all about triggering the right condition through repeated attempts, right? At most, I will just die. What's the big deal about that? With such a thought, Gu Fei stepped forward boldly and pointed at the guy in front of him, "Hey, you!"

The NPC immediately looked as if he wanted to flee.

"I saw you digging gold ore," Gu Fei went straight to the point.

The NPC's expression immediately changed and he suddenly turned around to escape.

"Stop!" Gu Fei hollered as he happily gave chase. See? Sometimes, it's very easy to trigger the next event.

Chapter 65 - The Legend of the Lycanthrope

The NPC actually ran very fast. Even with Gu Fei's full-Agility physique, he had to exert quite the effort to chase after the person. All he could do was ensure that his target would not leave his line of sight. Meanwhile, the heavily encumbered and slow Xiaoyu had long been abandoned far behind in this high-speed foot chase.

The places the NPC could flee were actually limited. In fact, he only circled the village a few times before finally barging in to a house.

Gu Fei firmly fixed his eyes on the NPC as he unhesitatingly strode forward and banged his fist on the house's door. Gu Fei had long steeled his resolve to confront the Werewolves despite knowing that there was a possibility of him dying. Actually, he was anticipating how the Werewolves would react toward his provocative actions. Would they transform and combine their strength to beat him up? Gu Fei could only accept the outcome if that really happened, as an entire guild was probably needed to accomplish this chain quest.

The door finally opened after a bout of knocking, yet the person that appeared before Gu Fei was not the one whom he had been chasing. The stout man standing in front of Gu Fei was at least a foot taller than him. He almost bit his tongue. A Werewolf would become bigger whenever it transformed. Given how well built this man looked, he would probably be as big as an elephant when he transformed!

Gu Fei had encountered him before. Seeing as the person Gu Fei was chasing had actually sought refuge in this man's house, could he perhaps be the Werewolves' leader?

"I want to know everything about the gold mine," Gu Fei immediately broached the subject.

The man remained mum but did not chase Gu Fei away.

“I already know you’re all Werewolves,” Gu Fei threw caution to the wind and laid his cards on the table.

Surprisingly, the man did not attempt to silence Gu Fei by killing him; instead, he just showed unease at Gu Fei’s revelation.

“Don’t worry. I won’t tell anyone about it,” Gu Fei clarified his stand on the matter to the Werewolf. He recalled that quests like this would need additional items beyond just a silver tongue. Merely appealing to the AI’s feelings was futile even though this was a full-immersion game. With that in mind, Gu Fei took out the urn containing Murphy’s ashes and presented it to the man.

“I found this inside the mine shaft. Since Murphy’s grave is empty, I suppose you all dug him out and cremated his remains?” Gu Fei asked for confirmation of his guess.

Gu Fei could see sorrow reflected in the man’s eyes.

The NPC’s change in emotion was etched clearly on his face for Gu Fei to see. He took the Werewolf’s emotional state into account as he thought of his follow-up question.

The NPC had initially shown anxiety and uncertainty upon hearing that their identity as Werewolves was exposed.

He then became morose when Gu Fei mentioned Murphy’s death.

Murphy would rather die than reveal his identity as a lycanthrope, and the rest of the villagers were still in the dark about this.

Gu Fei finally understood this whole business. This group of Werewolves was afraid that the villagers would uncover their identity. Murphy had chosen to return into his human form before dying to prevent the villagers from panicking among themselves, which would create trouble for his fellow Werewolves. After all, Murphy was a villager as well. Murphy being a Werewolf would surely make the villagers suspicious of the people around them. If the Werewolves were to live under such scrutiny, they would

sooner or later be exposed to the villagers.

Gu Fei felt ashamed of himself for jumping into conclusion that these Werewolves had murdered Murphy over a gold-ore-distribution dispute.

But then, who was the Werewolf that killed Murphy?

More importantly, why was this stout man before him not talking at all? Could he be a pureblood lycanthrope that had yet to master the human language?

“You all don’t want the villagers to know your real identity, right?” Gu Fei asked once more.

The stout man continued to stare at Gu Fei.

“Why?” Gu Fei displayed Xiaoyu’s stubbornness and continued to question the man until he finally got an answer.

“We don’t want to kill or be killed,” the stout man finally spoke.

Gu Fei sighed in relief and asked, “What do you mean?”

“If the villagers were to find out we are Werewolves, they would definitely try to eliminate us,” the burly man explained, “We have been living among them for so many years and never thought of harming them. We only hunt beasts deep into the woods during a full moon to honor our bestial bloodline.”

“So why do you all wish to live with humans?” Gu Fei asked.

“We are the ones who lived here first. In the past, we learned human mannerisms while living in the forest. Eventually, we decided to leave the forest and build this village. It was only later that the humans trickled in and decided to live with us. And after so many years, the village turned into what it is today,” the man explained further.

“What about the Werewolf that killed Murphy, then?” Gu Fei asked.

“He’s not one of us!” the man gritted his teeth. “I don’t know

where he came from, but he possesses tremendous strength. I think he's someone from the village because he knows us very well. But we can't seem to catch his scent."

"Why did he kill Murphy?" Gu Fei asked.

That stout man remained silent again.

"Ahhhhh! You guys ran so fast!" Xiaoyu's voice could be heard from behind Gu Fei, finally managing to catch up after so long.

Gu Fei suddenly thought of something and signaled Xiaoyu to take out the sack of gold ore that he had dug out from the forest near Murphy's backyard.

"I found a map in Murphy's house and dug this out," Gu Fei once again presented an item.

"What's with the gold mine?" Gu Fei pressed on.

That stout man said, "One full moon, we went deep into the forest to hunt animals. An unknown Werewolf suddenly appeared and demanded us to follow his orders. Murphy challenged him into a fight but was defeated. From then on, he demands us to take turns helping him extract gold ore every night."

"You have the strength in numbers; why are you afraid of one Werewolf? Gang up on him!" Gu Fei blurted out.

"We only attack in a pack when we are hunting animals. Duels are reserved for battles between two fellow Werewolves. Our law dictates that we follow the strongest," the man stated.

"Was that how Murphy died?" Gu Fei asked.

"No... We all deemed that the foreign Werewolf with dubious background was too strong for us, so Murphy worked hard to uncover his human identity in order to use that as a leverage. Unfortunately, he was discovered and killed during his search," the man sighed with regret.

"Don't you all wish to avenge Murphy?" Gu Fei questioned.

“We don’t know his human identity, and we couldn’t best him in combat either,” the man replied.

Gu Fei thought for a while and asked, “If Werewolves are injured by a silver weapon, what will happen?”

“In that case, the wound will require quite a few days to heal,” the man answered.

“Is one night sufficient to heal completely?”

“No.”

“Is there any medicine or spell that can overcome this?” Gu Fei pressed on.

“There’s none. Werewolves like us possess high regenerative abilities. We can recover very quickly provided that it is not a silver weapon that injures us,” the man revealed.

Gu Fei had already expected this answer, so he nodded his head, “Let us help you defeat this foreign Werewolf!”

“It is too shameful to depend on humans for this!” the man refused his offer.

Gu Fei had not expected the Werewolves to have this level of pride. Gu Fei helplessly commented, “Maybe he’s a human, too?”

“Human? We saw with our eyes that he is a Werewolf. He even has our species scent. It is only because his scent is masked very well when he takes his human form that we are unable to locate him,” the man said.

“Is he wearing something on his neck?” Gu Fei asked.

“It appears to be so....”

“That’s him. Yesterday, I cut him with a silver weapon, yet I could not find a single villager with a wound today. If he is not a human being, how did he recover so soon?” Gu Fei insisted, “Don’t worry. Just leave this matter to us! We promise not to tell others about your identity.”

Saying their farewell to the stout man, Gu Fei and Xiaoyu were once again on the road.

“What have you found out?” Xiaoyu asked. When she had arrived, Gu Fei and that man were already halfway into their conversation.

Gu Fei tried to give her a quick summary, yet Xiaoyu immediately forgot the first half while listening to the other half of the story. She only raised one question when he ended his spiel, “Humans can heal their wounds overnight?”

“We humans don’t possess fast healing ability, but we definitely do so in-game through the help of healing spells. Think of the NPC Priests by the entrance of the Priest Academy,” Gu Fei reminded Xiaoyu. Over by the entrance of the Priest Academy in Yunduan City, injured players could receive the NPC Priests’ healing and administering to recover. If these Priests could heal players, they would naturally be capable of healing fellow NPCs as well. Since Werewolves were creatures with an affinity to darkness, they would obviously not be able to receive healing from the holy spells the Priests used.

“So how can a human being transform into a Werewolf?” Xiaoyu asked, puzzled.

“I’m still not sure, although I already know who he is,” Gu Fei said in a dragging tone.

“Who?” Xiaoyu asked excitedly.

“Who owns a gold mine?” Gu Fei smiled.

“Mr. Adrian!” Xiaoyu answered.

“That’s right!” Gu Fei nodded.

“Ah! If you kill Mr Adrian, won’t my quest become incomplete?” Xiaoyu was worried.

“Of course, not!” Gu Fei said, “Even if Adrian is dead when I

finish my quest, he'll just respawn accordingly. He'll still be the same Adrian, the wealthiest person in Yeguang Village. You can even return to retrieve more gold ore from him in the future."

"That's fine, then!" Xiaoyu was appeased.

"It's all thanks to you," Gu Fei complimented.

"Why?"

"If I didn't know about your quest, I wouldn't find out that Adrian and the gold mine are linked. How else would I learn that he's THAT Werewolf?" Gu Fei laughed.

"I told you I'm a quest expert!" Xiaoyu felt ten feet tall.

"The very best!" Gu Fei praised generously.

"Does that mean you're about to complete your chain quest?" Xiaoyu asked.

"Pretty soon, it seems," He could see the outline of Adrian's mansion far ahead on this path. Gu Fei took out Sacred Flames of Baptism, "The only question I have at this point is how to defeat him."

Chapter 66 - Fang of the Wolf King

Despite Gu Fei questioning himself on how to go about defeating Adrian, the reason he dared to confront the latter in the first place was because he was confident that he would succeed.

Only two things could allow a human being to turn into a lycanthrope: a spell or equipment. Since Adrian continued to wear a weird necklace even when he transformed into a Werewolf, Gu Fei was sure that the item was the one that allowed the latter to do so.

Gu Fei did not recall seeing any item around Adrian's neck when he had met him earlier today, however. This meant that the necklace was not wearable all the time; instead, it could only be equipped during crucial moments. This must be because putting the necklace on would immediately transform the wearer into a Werewolf. Hence, as long as Gu Fei could prevent Adrian from equipping the necklace, the latter would stay as a regular human being that he could easily defeat.

Gu Fei went over the plan in his mind one more time and felt that it was foolproof. Currently, Adrian's mansion loomed before him.

Gu Fei raised his arm, inhaled deeply, and knocked on the door.

When Adrian opened the door, Gu Fei quickly spied his neck. It was unadorned.

"Ah, Chosen Hero, welcome," Adrian's tone of voice had not changed.

Gu Fei took out the sack of gold ore he had found in Murphy's property, "I know everything. These are the gold ore Murphy hid. I believe he was trying to use these as bait to lure you out. You must have been searching for these for a long time."

This was not a meaningless gesture. NPCs belonged to a unique category that the players could interact with whenever they

wanted. But if the system deemed this interaction as a form of attack that would reduce the NPCs' health, it would immediately make the NPCs immune to the assault. Meaning, the NPCs would no longer be assailable. This was similar to how the safe zones functioned for players. Therefore, Gu Fei must trigger the conditions that would allow him to engage the NPC Adrian in a combat.

Adrian's expression changed after the sack of gold ore was tossed in front of him.

"The Werewolves already told me everything about this matter. I know you're the one pulling the strings behind the scenes. You know their identity, including their unwillingness to harm humans. You use their weaknesses to threaten them into doing your bidding. How utterly despicable!" I feel so foolish... Gu Fei thought as he mimed gagging inside his head, I'm actually talking about morals with an AI.

"Surrender yourself!" Gu Fei's Sacred Flames of Baptism flashed out.

Adrian abruptly turned around to flee, but Gu Fei had been prepared for it. Gu Fei did not plan to give Adrian any breathing space, as mere seconds were all the latter needed to equip that necklace.

Adrian proved himself to be an agile individual, managing to dodge Gu Fei's slash. However, this adroitness was nothing compared to a Werewolf's. At most, it was comparable to Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto's speed.

"Xiaoyu, block the back door!" Gu Fei shouted.

"Got it!" While Adrian was still receiving Gu Fei in the foyer of the mansion, Xiaoyu had already positioned herself in the back door under Gu Fei's instruction.

Only in this cramped space could Gu Fei pressure Adrian with his

every strike, preventing the latter from having any chance to put the necklace on. Actually, Gu Fei had practiced these same attack patterns in the Inn a few hours ago. Coincidentally, the size of the Inn was about the same size as Adrian's mansion.

Waves of heat from Sacred Flames of Baptism rippled everywhere in the foyer as Gu Fei executed his bladework. The silver blade harmoniously interlaced with luminous flashes of red. All Adrian could do was to keep dodging this exquisite barrage of slashes, becoming more and more suppressed as time went by.

"F*ck this!" Ye Xiaowu, who had been raptly monitoring Gu Fei's progress from far away, could not help but exclaim when he saw Gu Fei making it to the final obstacle. He had indeed designed a necklace that would allow Mr. Adrian to transform himself into a Werewolf. He just never expected Gu Fei to discover this loophole and exploit it. If Ye Xiaowu was not seeing the scene right now, he would not believe it possible for someone to suppress Mr. Adrian to the point of him not being able to equip the necklace.

Although each chain quest utilized the storyline's degree of completion as a gauge, it would usually cumulate to a poignant challenging battle at a critical juncture. After all, combat was the main focus in MMOs.

In Gu Fei's chain quest, this fight with the Werewolf Mr. Adrian should be akin to a face-off with a game's last Boss. Defeating it through a player's superior strength was naturally the most straightforward method. Other methods existed as well to allow the completion of this quest's stage, such as destroying Mr. Adrian's necklace or dragging the fight until the effect of the transformation ended. Preventing Mr. Adrian from equipping the necklace from the start was not included in these methods, however. And yet, Gu Fei had managed to do just that.

By doing so, the strength of the last Boss, also known as a chain quest's completion gatekeeper, had drastically decreased. The current Mr. Adrian's combat ability was akin to a downgraded

version of the Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto; the two's speed was the same, yet Mr. Adrian possessed lower attack power and defense.

“Wait! Hold it!” Adrian loudly pleaded. Although his body was littered with wounds, he was still a Boss and could not easily be felled like the average monster by Gu Fei. Owing to this fact, he remained quite lively even after taking some of Gu Fei's attacks.

Gu Fei did not stop his assault, however. What if this was a ploy Adrian had cooked up to stop Gu Fei's attacks and give himself room to wear the necklace?

“Do you know what you're doing? You're helping a foreign race while killing your own!” Adrian incessantly hollered as he tried to escape from Gu Fei, “They're Werewolves! Cruelty and murder run in their blood!”

Gu Fei felt annoyed at how this AI had come around to lecture him on the issues of morality.

“Let me go and I'll give you half of my fortune inside the cellar!” Adrian begged.

Adrian only received a flash of red as his answer.

“ALL OF IT!” Mr. Adrian desperately added.

Another flash of red came his way.

Gu Fei mercilessly attacked Adrian until the latter finally collapsed into a heap on the ground, yelling until he breathed his last, “You IDIOT!”

Gu Fei raised his hand and slashed for one final time; everything abruptly became quiet.

Ye Xiaowu stared dumbly at the screen before him. Even the NPC villain's final plea failed to work on Gu Fei. Mr. Adrian had received coding to verbally persuade his assailant to stop his or her attacks once the NPC's health fell to one fifth of the original.

If the player considered this offer as a possible reward for the chain quest and let his or her guard down, Mr. Adrian would use the time it took the player to retrieve the fortune from the cellar to escape.

This escape would be systematically carried out and the player could do nothing to prevent this. Mr. Adrian would definitely disappear somewhere within the game.

Letting the perpetrator escape during this fight sequence meant that the completion rate would be curbed at 80%, despite the chain quest being tagged as completed at that point.

“This guy...” Ye Xiaowu mumbled. The monitoring system’s lack of sound prevented Ye Xiaowu from hearing Gu Fei’s final words after he had cut down Mr. Adrian, “You’re the real idiot! Killing you means that all your fortune belongs to me now, right?”

“QUEST COMPLETE!” Xiaoyu cheerfully exclaimed after Adrian was defeated.

Gu Fei pulled out his quest log to check. The quest was still listed as ongoing, so there must still be some work left. In fact, Gu Fei had yet to receive an experience point even now.

As he looted Adrian’s corpse, he indeed found a necklace among his valuables.

[Fang of the Wolf King. Turns wearer into a Werewolf Lord for 15 minutes. Cool-down period: 60 minutes.]

Gu Fei happily put it on, wanting to give it a try. Instead, he received a system prompt. [Quest item. Unusable for players.]

This was a rare sight in Parallel World. Even if Mages could not move when wearing the Warrior job class’ heavy armor, they could still put it on. Gu Fei had never experienced being restricted from wearing an accessory around his neck.

Xiaoyu wanted to have a look as well, yet an unknown force prevented Gu Fei from handing it over to her.

“It says it’s a quest item,” Gu Fei explained helplessly.

“Oh!”

“Let’s keep looting,” Gu Fei bent over and continued searching Adrian’s corpse, “Let’s search for the key to the cellar. There’re a lot of gold ore in there.”

A key indeed hung by Adrian’s waist. The two quickly rushed to the backyard with it, unlocking the cellar double doors and climbing down.

Although heaps of treasures could be found within, they were identical to the gold ore in Murphy’s sack. The duo did not know if they could exchange gold ore for in-game currency. Gu Fei and Xiaoyu looked at each other.

“What now?” Xiaoyu asked.

“Can we exchange these for gold coins?” Gu Fei asked.

“I don’t think so,” The gold ore Xiaoyu received were meant to be exchanged for a quest reward, and she was unsure if that would be in gold coins or something else.

They had a cellar full of gold ore, yet they had no way of turning them into usable in-game currency. It was truly a painful realization.

They could not carry all the gold ore back as well even if they wanted to. Gold ore were extremely heavy. Xiaoyu’s burlap sack was carried by her, and Gu Fei’s weak in-game physique could only sustain carrying the gold ore for three steps.

“Forget it!” Gu Fei sighed bitterly.

Xiaoyu began to repeat this mantra, “There’s no gold here, only trash... There’s no gold here, only trash....”

The two had no choice but to leave the cellar empty-handed. Gu Fei brought the Fang of the Wolf King to the village chief as he explained the situation.

“It was all Adrian’s doing. He used this trinket to transform himself into a Werewolf, threatening the villagers into drudgery. He even killed Murphy,” Gu Fei kept his word and did not mention the fact that half of the villagers in Yeguang Village were Werewolves.

“He’s truly a scoundrel,” the village chief agreed, “It’s all thanks to you, Chosen Hero. You have resolved our village’s greatest crisis, and to show our gratitude...” Chief Edwin swiftly went inside the house and searched through a cabinet’s drawer.

Gu Fei felt excited. His efforts were not in vain now that he was about to receive his reward.

“Take these clothes!” The village chief emerged after a while and handed Gu Fei a robe – a mage robe to be precise.

Gu Fei was extremely disappointed. He was only wearing his mage robe to disguise his identity. Gu Fei honestly felt that he had wasted his time on completing such a difficult quest upon being solemnly issued a mage robe. Gu Fei truly hated the Mage job class now, as his reward was probably influenced by it. If Gu Fei were a Thief, he would probably get a thief cloak.

“Take it!” Chief Edwin said once more. Xiaoyu became anxious, “Hurry up and take it! Just what are you dawdling for?”

Gu Fei glumly took the item, casually examining it.

Midnight Spirit Robe. Its defense was average, which was a common aspect of mage robes. Besides that, it increased Intelligence by 20, Spell Mastery by 1, and spell damage by 10%.

“What’s Spell Mastery?” Gu Fei asked, as he handed it to Xiaoyu who wanted to have a look.

Xiaoyu shook her head, clueless.

It was clearly a great mage robe as it boosted Intelligence and something called Spell Mastery. But in Gu Fei’s case... He could only sigh at the sight of it. Nevertheless, it was much better than

the beginner mage robe that he was currently wearing. Just the defense alone is an upgrade! It's gold-tier equipment after all, Gu Fei thought of this as he took off his beginner mage robe and put Midnight Spirit Robe on. It was a pitch-black robe, which truly embodied the darkness.

“You look really evil,” Xiaoyu critiqued.

As Gu Fei was feeling annoyed, he suddenly realized that Chief Edwin had not taken the Fang of the Wolf King necklace despite awarding him this mage robe. In addition, Gu Fei saw that it was still classified as a quest item. Oh? Will I receive another reward if I take it to the Werewolves and let them have a look? Gu Fei could feel hope reigniting within him once more.

Chapter 67 - The Final Reward

Gu Fei brought the Fang of the Wolf King with him as he paid the stout Werewolf another visit.

“I’ve gotten rid of him,” Gu Fei straightforwardly said as he handed over the quest item, “He made a fool out of everyone by using this to transform himself into a lycanthrope.”

After taking a good look at the item, the stout Werewolf expressed his shock, “He’s a Werewolf Lord! No wonder he’s so strong!”

“He’s alright, I guess...” Gu Fei could only say so as he did not actually have the chance to witness how strong the Werewolf Lord was. Ironically, he had in fact had the chance to do so last night. The Werewolf Lord, unfortunately, fled with his tail between his legs once he had received a slight injury.

“You did us a favor. We are also eternally grateful that you have kept your promise to not expose our identity to others,” the stout Werewolf sincerely said, adding, “To prevent the occurrence of a similar dilemma, can you leave the Fang of the Wolf King in our hands?”

“Sure,” Gu Fei immediately acquiesced.

“To express our gratitude...” The stout Werewolf went inside his room and rummaged through the bottom of his bed. Gu Fei could feel his heart sinking. The reward from Chief Edwin was at least properly stored inside a drawer. How great could this reward be if it was tossed haphazardly by the stout Werewolf under his bed?

But Gu Fei’s eyes lit up when the stout Werewolf emerged and faced Gu Fei once more.

The stout Werewolf was holding a sword. The blade had an expensive wine’s purplish shine to it, while its surface was shrouded in a layer of black luster. The weapon exhibited the

qualities of a top-grade weapon from its naked appearance alone.

The stout Werewolf handed it over, and Gu Fei eagerly accepted it.

Moonlit Nightfalls.

The weapon's traits gave Gu Fei quite a shock. Not only did the sword possess a very high Physical Attack, it also had a fair share of Magic Attack, which was superior than the Magic Attack of the stave July had gifted him.

The magic staves' main offense was naturally their Magic Attack. However, the term 'Physical Attack' would be listed on the magic staves' traits window as well. This was because magic staves could technically function as physical weapons. As for weapons like sword, dagger, or saber, they would usually not have the word 'Magic Attack' displayed on their traits window. Compared to all those weapons, the current sword in Gu Fei's hands not only had high Magic Attack listed on its traits window, the Physical Attack was very substantial as well.

Two more traits could be seen further down. [Sword Aptitude 170%. Spell Aptitude 170%]

Even more traits were displayed below. [10% proc rate for critical attack, plus 10% increase in critical damage. +20 Agility. +20 Intelligence. 20% increase in attack speed. Usable skill: Impending Nightfalls... Conditions are not met; skill unavailable.]

It was terrific! The finest weapon! No matter how much of a noob gamer Gu Fei was, he could still tell how powerful the sword was based on its traits.

Even Sword Demon's Frost Memories dagger, which Gu Fei had once considered as the finest weapon so far, paled in comparison to this sword right here.

Although Frost Memories was fine, it was just gold-tier equipment in the end. Moonlit Nightfalls, on the other hand, was

purple-tier equipment.

Purple-tier equipment was the strongest gear in Parallel World if treated as a standalone item. The only one stronger than it was green-tier equipment. But green-tier equipment came in a set. Thus, players had to collect each piece and activate the hidden traits first before the green-tier equipment could unleash its full potential. Therefore, green-tier equipment was inferior to purple-tier equipment in terms of individual use.

“Look! Look at my sword!” Gu Fei excitedly shoved the sword to Xiaoyu so that she could admire it as well.

“Woahhhhhh!” Xiaoyu exclaimed as she looked at the sword before asking, “Sword Aptitude... Spell Aptitude... What do they mean?”

“No idea!” Gu Fei replied, “But they must be incredible.”

“Why?”

“Because you can’t see these words on the usual weapons,” Gu Fei took out Sacred Flames of Baptism and checked its traits once more. Sure enough, the word ‘Aptitude’ was missing on the traits window.

“That’s rad!” Xiaoyu returned the sword to Gu Fei, “I want to do a quest like this as well.”

“You will get your chance!” Gu Fei patted Xiaoyu.

“Both our quests are done,” Xiaoyu said as they left the stout Werewolf’s house. Just as they stepped outside the door, a beam of white light enveloped Gu Fei.

“What happened?!” Xiaoyu was startled into pulling out her axe.

“Chill!” Gu Fei said to her immediately, “I’m fine. It’s just a level up.”

“What’s with the sudden level up for no apparent reason?” Xiaoyu asked.

Gu Fei glanced over at the system notification. The system had sent Gu Fei a message when they exited the stout Werewolf's house. [Completed the chain quest 'Eddie's Mission' with a rate of 95%. Experience points and coins rewarded.] Apparently, the experience points Gu Fei had acquired were enough for him to reach level 31.

"I've earned plenty of experience points!" Gu Fei was dumbfounded. The rewards for this particular chain quest were simply too astronomical. Including Flames of Baptism that had received a new trait after being plated with silver by Chief Edwin, Gu Fei received a total of four equipment and an unexpectedly hefty amount of experience points from this quest. On the other hand, the monetary reward was not that grand, as Gu Fei found that he had only gained fifty more gold coins upon checking his money pouch.

"That's a given," Ye Xiaowu, who was observing from afar, smiled wryly as he saw the shocked expression on Gu Fei's face. It would have been strange if the experience points given were insufficient to even raise one level of someone who had completed a chain quest beyond his league. Furthermore, the traits listed on the two final rewards – Spell Mastery, Sword Aptitude, and Spell Aptitude – had yet to be made available for the low-level gear equipped by the low-level players. Ye Xiaowu was left speechless since Gu Fei had access to those traits now after acquiring that fine equipment from this chain quest.

Ye Xiaowu felt depressed when he saw Gu Fei's glum look upon obtaining the Midnight Spirit Robe. He really wanted to stab Gu Fei at that moment. He dared feel displeased with such an item? Luckily, Ye Xiaowu calmed down once he saw Gu Fei's reaction upon obtaining the Moonlit Nightfalls.

"Come on. Let's go back!" Xiaoyu urged.

"Back to where?"

“Yunduan City! I’m calling Master Kang,” Xiaoyu replied.

“Easy there. We’re not in a hurry,” Gu Fei said, “We’ve put effort into trekking a mountain range for three hours just to reach this faraway city. Let’s roam around some more first! Don’t you want to see what kinds of quests they have around here?”

Xiaoyu’s eyes beamed, “You’ve got a point.”

“It’s best if you accept a quest that requires you returning to Yunduan City to complete it. That way, it’s even more worthwhile for you coming here,” Gu Fei rambled on with his silver tongue, while Xiaoyu kept on bobbing her head. Finally, she decided, “You’re right! I’ve made up my mind to stay in Yueye City for a few more days. Go ahead if you’re leaving. There’s no need to wait for me.”

“Well, I feel a little tired already. I’m logging off once I get into the city,” Gu Fei said.

The two left Yeguang Village and headed to Yueye City.

All the surrounding players in Yueye City behaved audaciously, just like the players in the local grinding zones. Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had already witnessed four or five different brawls while they traveled from Yeguang Village to Yueye City. Those players were very brutal with their fights, never stopping until their opponents were dead. Gu Fei and Xiaoyu carefully went past them, trying not to get involved with the local brawls.

The current Gu Fei was still bounded by the PvP penalties he had incurred previously. About ten hours had passed since he went online in Yunduan City. He still had twenty hours to go before he could clear off all his PK points. It would be somewhat dangerous to enter a city at his current state, but Gu Fei did not give it much thought right now. The chain quest that he had completed gave him a thorough mental workout, and Xiaoyu, who was beside him all that time, did not actually contribute much aside from physical labor. Having been forced to rack his brain and ponder on for a

long period of time, Gu Fei considered grinding a whole afternoon to be less exhausting. Hence, at the moment, he only cared about logging off and resting in reality.

When the two entered Yueye City, Gu Fei immediately waved goodbye at Xiaoyu and headed toward a nearby player to inquire about the nearest log-off point.

That player was quite taken aback upon hearing that Gu Fei had come from another city. So once the player had pointed Gu Fei toward the right way, the former also made his own inquiries on how to get to the city the latter originated.

“There’s no way of settling down in Yueye City, anymore. It’s too chaotic. It’s one skirmish after another every single day. Nobody even bothers grinding once reaching level 30; all everyone does is PvP all day!”

“Why’s that?” Gu Fei could not understand.

“That’s because level 30 is when everyone will need to accumulate a large number of experience points! Think about it! Imagine the experience points you now possess are equivalent to a mid level 30; once you get killed by others, the loss of points you’ll suffer is equivalent to dropping from level 29 to level 25. Is it worth it? Nowadays, all are afraid to suffer such a huge loss, so they refrain from grinding further. But they can’t bear to watch others reach a higher level either. In the end, it turns into this endless cycle of PvP where everyone is trying to stop the others from leveling up further,” the player explained to Gu Fei.

“Can’t believe there’s such a thing here,” Gu Fei was bewildered.

“Well, we don’t really have a choice when all are too afraid to grind over here. All we can do is hone our crafting skills... The players over here in Yueye City have very high crafting skills, by the way. So if you want to get yourself new equipment or procure some kind of medication, you’ve come to the right place,” the player continued to brief Gu Fei on how things were locally, before

he asked, “Oh, yeah. I forgot to ask you this. What’s the name of the city you came from?”

“Yunduan City,” Gu Fei answered.

“Holy sh*t! Yunduan City?! The one with the Close Combat Mage?” the player exclaimed.

“Close Combat Mage?”

“How can you not know? It’s someone with the serial number 27149. He’s ranked first on the Wanted Players list of the ‘Bounty Mission’ right now. Apparently, this person’s a Mage who allocated all his stat points toward Agility and engages in close combat. Super rad. He managed to make short work of a Thief and dropped his level eight times... Hot dang! It’s simply amazing. A player with such caliber should settle down here in Yueye City. I bet he’ll fit right in.”

On the surface, it seemed like Gu Fei was keeping a straight face. Inside, a surge of emotions had risen. He was thinking about how he had nowhere to display his kung fu in reality, yet he had already caused quite a stir and gained countless admirers by simply unleashing a bit of it within this VRMMO. Gu Fei considered kung fu as a weapon for fighting, and only in such a chaotic world could he receive the greatest form of respect for it.

Gu Fei was lost in his thoughts about kung fu, while the player was lost in his thoughts about Gu Fei’s attire.

“You said a while ago that the nearest log-off point is this way, right?” Gu Fei asked while pointing at the street ahead.

“Yeah.”

“I’ll be on my way, then. See you around,” Gu Fei parted ways with the player.

“Bye,” the player said as he nodded.

Gu Fei walked down the street. While looking at the departing

figure, the player opened his mercenary group channel, “I found an easy target.”

“How easy?” someone asked on the channel.

“A black mage robe. Have you seen it before?” the player asked.

“What kind of traits?”

“Couldn’t appraise it...” the player answered.

“F*ck. Isn’t your Appraisal skill at rank 8, already?”

“Da*n you! Haven’t you heard of the phrase, ‘There’s always someone better’? It’s not like rank 8 is the ceiling for this skill,” the player replied indignantly.

“Even his Appraisal has been honed to a rank higher than ours... Doesn’t seem like he’s just a regular guy... Do we have what it takes to mess with someone like that?”

“Relax! It’s not a problem. For some unknown reason, he came here from another city. He’s all alone. Who else can we target but him? You lot better get moving. He’s on his way to a designated log-off point.”

“Which route did he take?”

“The C route!”

“F*ck. Isn’t that a long way to the safe zone?”

“Doesn’t change the fact that we still have to hurry up. I’ll go after him now,” The player entered Stealth mode and slowly followed behind Gu Fei.

Chapter 68 - A Bunch of Idiotic Robbers

Gu Fei continued walking down a paved road devoid of any pedestrians except for him. Out of boredom, he pulled out the sword, Moonlit Nightfalls, from his dimensional pocket and gazed admiringly at it once more. As a kung fu practitioner, Gu Fei did not care much about his fashion, yet he had a picky taste when it came to his weapon. He found that Moonlit Nightfalls was to his liking, as its weight, size, shape, and design seemed to be custom-made for him. Even in reality, he had never had a weapon that suited his taste this much.

While Gu Fei was taking in the sword's beauty, a disturbance down the street reached his ears. A bunch of men, all brandishing a variety of weapons against one another, came into view from the street ahead. Before long, their chaotic fight filtered into the lane Gu Fei was in, with someone yelling out, "Don't let them get away!"

Gu Fei furrowed his brows. He had decided to take the shortcut indicated by that player from before due to laziness. The lane he was currently in could not exactly be considered as an alleyway but more like a narrow gap between two rows of houses. These people, who had brought their fight into this cramped walkway, effectively blocked the only way out. Gu Fei knew that even if he continued walking forward, they would not pause their fight just to let him through.

Should he turn back? Gu Fei looked back and immediately felt exhausted just from seeing the distance back. Having no wish to backtrack, Gu Fei decided to keep going forward on the cramped walkway. While maintaining a firm grip around the hilt of Moonlit Nightfalls with his right hand, he took out Sacred Flames of Baptism with his left hand.

In the blink of an eye, Gu Fei arrived at the scuffle. The combatants had of course noticed Gu Fei, but they gave off the vibe

that they were slightly holding back as they clashed their weapons with one another.

In contrast, Gu Fei appeared to have not noticed their presence as he plunged headlong through them.

“Ack! Be careful!” a person on the left warned. The person was currently thrusting his dagger toward another person when Gu Fei forcibly squeezed his way through the gap between them. Despite shouting a warning, the person’s hand did not stop its attack at all.

Gu Fei did not bother about the person’s contradicting action. He simply raised his left hand holding Sacred Flames of Baptism to parry the stab as he passed through the gap between the pair. Gu Fei’s next step brought him out of the two’s range of fight.

“Ah!” The shout this time came from a person on the right. He was swinging a claymore downward from above his head.

Gu Fei did not dare forcefully block this swing from a player who seemed to be a Warrior. As he was considering how he should deal with it, he noticed that the pair ahead had momentarily stopped exchanging blows. Gu Fei nimbly stepped forward, and the claymore narrowly brushed past his nape with a whoosh.

At the next moment, Gu Fei lifted his two swords and blocked the attacks coming from both sides. Swiftly propelling himself forward with another step, he shunted past this pair as well.

In an instant, Gu Fei had passed through three pairs of combatants unscathed by simply dodging and parrying.

Placing Moonlit Nightfalls and Sacred Flames of Baptism back into his dimensional pocket, Gu Fei dusted off his sleeves and folded his hands inside them. He then continued toward his destination without sparing the skirmish behind him another glance.

After a bit, the fighting in the walkway had stopped as well, and the group of brawlers could be seen standing frozen on their spots.

All their faces displayed a look of disbelief. They could not wrap up their minds around what had just happened.

“Where’s that guy? Where did he go?” Someone dazedly looked at his weapon as he tried to comprehend what he had just seen.

“Did... he just... walk through?” another asked for confirmation with a voice filled with incredulity.

“But how?” someone expressed his doubt as well.

“It was like this—then that—and then—arghhh!” This person tried to simulate Gu Fei’s moves. The actions looked rather similar, yet the person suddenly clutched his waist with a pained expression.

“What’s the matter?!” everyone asked in shock.

“I twisted my waist. This particular move is rather difficult. You guys try it, too,” the person wailed.

Thus, everyone went about copying that particular move by Gu Fei. The end result was half of them not being able to do it and the other half spraining their waists from the overexertion of their muscles. The degree of their sprain varied on how much strength they had used.

“Ouch! Owwww...” Half of them gritted their teeth as they cried out in pain.

“What’s the matter?” A running figure suddenly appeared out of thin air. It was the guy who had earlier given Gu Fei direction. Due to his reduced speed while on Stealth, he could only watch Gu Fei get further and further away. By the time he arrived into this walkway, Gu Fei’s figure had long vanished from view. He immediately canceled Stealth when he saw all his buddies crying loudly in pain.

“Where did that guy go? How come he still escaped with so many of you here?” he asked in shock. Half of the ten ambushers in the walkway seemed to be suffering from injuries as well.

Everyone felt flustered. They were tongue-tied on how to explain the situation. Should they say that they had unknowingly allowed Gu Fei to pass through them? Or that their injuries were embarrassingly self-inflicted as they tried to recreate the earlier incident?

“What’s that guy’s job class?” one of them asked as he tried to divert the topic.

“Yeah! What’s his job class? He’s got some strange moves!” Gu Fei’s unfathomable display made everyone assume that he possessed a special skill that none of them had yet.

“That guy? I think he’s a Mage,” the ‘guide’, who had given Gu Fei direction, answered with uncertainty.

“Didn't you fail to appraise him before?” someone probed, “Then, how sure are you that he’s a Mage?”

“He’s wearing a mage robe, right?” the guide threw this question back.

“Wearing a mage robe doesn’t guarantee that he’s a Mage! Everyone here thinks he’s not a Mage!” someone insisted.

“Agree! That guy’s definitely not a Mage!”

“Come to think of it; what he’s wearing may not even be a mage robe. It’s black! Your Appraisal failed on him as well,” another chimed in.

Since the game’s open beta launching, there had yet to be a black mage robe. A majority of the players considered the Mage and Priest as wholesome job classes that would never be issued black attire by the system. In their minds, black attire was reserved for the Thief job class, which sounded rather loathsome just from its name alone.

The guide did not say anything for a beat, before finally commenting, “If not a mage robe, then what?”

No one answered him, although someone commented, “That guy’s sword looks super rad. I’ve never seen anything like it before.”

“D*mn! What’re we still gabbing about here for?! Let’s chase after him!” someone hollered to remind everyone of their goal.

“Let’s! Quick! Show us the route he’s taking!” another said as he pulled out a map.

“I directed him to this route, so he should be passing this way,” the ‘guide’ answered as he traced a certain path on the map with his index finger.

“But he’s already seen us. He’ll surely recognize us when he sees us again,” someone commented.

“Guess we can’t fake a scene anymore. Let’s be straightforward about this, then,” another suggested.

The rest nodded their heads.

“Masks!” someone reminded.

All excitedly pulled out a piece of triangular cloth, as a devout expression crossed their faces.

“We thank that player in Yunduan City who thought up of such an ingenious method to hide a player’s identity. We’ll now walk the path toward riches!” a man recited with gravitas.

“Utmost gratitude!” everyone sincerely agreed.

“We’re using this for the first time, so let’s do our best. We don’t want to be the laughingstocks of the players in Yunduan City,” the same man stated.

All nodded their heads solemnly.

“Alright!” The man pulled his buddies to huddle together, taking out a strip of paper with the numbers 27149 written on it using large font.

“This is the benefactor who has paved the way for our group. Although we don’t know his name or his appearance, his glorious record of attaining 15 PK points in a few hours is forever etched in Parallel World’s history. May he protect us,” With that, he burned the slip of paper.

All clasped their hands in front of them and silently said their prayers.

Someone broke this solemn silence as he said, “Boss, I heard that that guy did not pick up the dropped equipment after killing his target. We don’t seem to be walking the same path as him.”

“Don’t worry about the minor details. Just accept it!” the boss snapped.

Everyone continued to pray until the ceremony ended. Gu Fei, who was hundreds of meters away, sneezed his loudest sneeze ever in-game.

“Can you guys really handle this mission?” the boss asked some of the gathered people. Half of them had the same posture: one hand holding a weapon and the other rubbing the waist. They were the few that had sprained their waists while trying to imitate Gu Fei’s moves.

“We’re fine! It’s the first time we’re doing a masked operation. We’ll definitely participate!” the few said resolutely.

“Very well,” the boss nodded his head, “Everyone get ready. Masks!”

With that order from the big boss, all covered their faces with a piece of cloth.

“Let’s go! We’ll show the players in Yunduan City that we’re Yueye City’s masked professionals!” the boss bellowed.

“Yeah!” While the group of highwaymen set off in high spirits, the boss was furrowing his brows. Half of his followers had one of their arms akimbo, looking extremely ugly as they limped forward.

They somewhat ruined the image of his mercenary group with their awkward movements. Suddenly, he thought of something, Does it matter? Everyone's wearing a mask, anyway.

Wearing a mask is truly great! Can't lose our face even if we want to! The boss heaved a relieved sigh, as he once again praised the man who had come up with the method.

"I'll add another piece just in case!" The boss added another piece of cloth on top of the one currently covering his face. He felt pleased for coming up with something that their benefactor had not thought up of yet.

As they rushed out of the walkway, the players on the street were immediately drawn to their astonishing sight.

The group of highwaymen obviously understood the concept of not being able to lose face even if they wanted to, as they completely ignored the look everyone was throwing their way. Instead, they focused on following the path that they had previously discussed.

"Who are these people?" a player asked curiously.

"The Black Hand mercenary group," someone answered.

"How did you know?"

"Someone's wearing the mercenary group's emblem," he explained.

"What's the point of masking themselves if their emblems can be seen? Are they stupid?"

"Most likely...."

The group was steadily advancing forward when a player from a side-alley grabbed one of them, "Coward, there you are! Didn't we make a deal that you'll get me two bandage rolls, yesterday? Hand them over!"

"I'm no coward!" the man's voice stated calmly.

“I know. Your name’s Coward’s Savior! Two words are one too many. Coward is just easier and nicer to say,” the player mocked.

“How did you know it's me?” Coward’s Savior asked, feeling shocked.

“I recognized your equipment! What’re you lot up to, anyway?”

“None of your business!” Coward’s Savior retorted. He then bitterly reported on the mercenary channel, “Boss! I’ve been exposed!”

“To think you couldn’t even hide your identity. I’m sorry but you’re not qualified to be a part of this special mercenary group,” the boss remarked coldly.

A cruel system prompt sounded next. [Coward’s Savior has been kicked out from The Black Hand mercenary group.]

“D*mn! I’m going to f*ck you up!” Coward’s Savior tore off his mask and dove straight for the player who had revealed his identity.

“Don’t bother with him. Let’s continue onward,” the boss ordered the few hesitant players.

“Boss, I have that guy in my line of sight. He’s just right ahead,” one of the players in front reported.

“Alright, break up! We’ll surround him stealthily. Don’t let him reach the safe zone. This is our last chance,” the boss commanded.

“Go! Go! Go!” someone shouted and everyone split up.

Chapter 69 - Gu Family's Sword Style

Gu Fei passed through the walkway and got on to the street. The designated log-off point was just ahead. As he was proceeding to it at a leisure pace, he sensed movement from the side. He swept his gaze over that area and saw a shadowy figure brushing past him. The figure got into an alleyway just in front and peeked out half of his head from behind a column of a wall. Gu Fei noticed that the figure was looking directly at... him.

Where did this person come from? Gu Fei looked back at the way he had come from and saw in time two heads swiftly ducking behind a wall corner. Gu Fei faced forward for a bit, and then he abruptly faced backward again. Once more, he spotted the two heads swiftly ducking behind that wall corner.

Gu Fei felt miserable. Was it too much to ask for peace? He simply could not have peace wherever he went! This phrase really held truth: "As long as there are men, there will be a Jianghu." Gu Fei pulled out his newly acquired sword, the Moonlit Nightfalls while mulling over these words.

Saber and sword were often associated with each other. There was an adage: "Whereas a saber is a ferocious tiger, a sword is a soaring phoenix." Although the saying sounded nice, it actually inferred that a sword was the more elegant weapon between the two as it focused on skill and technique utilization. At the same time, this adage emphasized that a sword's pragmatic use and destructive power were inferior to a saber's in a combat.

A saber relied on slashes and chops to attack, whereas a sword depended on thrusts. It went without saying which of these two weapons had the greater offense and was more wielder-friendly.

Slashing and chopping were usually done with the sharp edge of a blade, regardless if it was a saber or a sword. But since a sword had two edges, forging it was much more complex and delicate.

The process itself could lower the blade's resistance to impact. Hence, the swords' popularity on the battlefields was soon eclipsed by the sabers'. Eventually, swords were reduced to mere decorative items, which served as a symbol of status. The adage: "A scholar carries a sword, a warrior wields a saber" originated from this.

Naturally, Gu Fei's purpose for learning kung fu was not to fight on a battlefield. He had dabbled in a variety of kung fu fields for the sake of mastering it. Gu Fei had of course learned basic sword techniques ever since he was a child. There was a famous line among martial arts practitioners: "Changing a style is easy, but changing the strength required for different styles is not." A man who specialized in offensive, ferocious kung fu moves would find it hard to adapt to a kung fu like Tai chi, which utilized gentle, defensive moves. The same principle applied to alternating between a saber and a sword.

Actually, Gu Fei was seen by his family as a gifted individual precisely because of his adaptability to the different styles of martial arts. Gu Fei had shown outstanding aptitude toward all sorts of kung fu fields since he was young. This had caused his family to obsessively nurture him into a walking kung fu encyclopedia. They had drilled into his head all types of knowledge pertaining to kung fu. So while Gu Fei might not be proficient in their use, he was at least knowledgeable about them by the time he had reached the age of twenty-two.

Gu Family's sword style was fairly well known in the kung fu community. The old fogeys in Gu Fei's family even mentioned multiple times how it had been passed down for generations, with quite a few of their talented ancestors expanding and improving it over time. In any case, the original sword style manual, which was rumored to be in the form of a bamboo scroll, had been preserved well at their ancestral house. Sadly, Gu Fei did not get the chance to lay eyes on it, as his father had just given him a disc by the time it was his turn to learn the sword style. His father said that it was

time to do things the twenty-first-century way since it was already the twenty-first century. As for that legendary bamboo scroll, his father told him to wait until he was at the helm of the family. He would have the right to see it by then.

Laying eyes on that mysterious bamboo scroll had been his ultimate goal when he was young. But as he grew older, the curiosity in him ebbed away and transformed into indifference toward it. Realistically speaking, learning from the bamboo scroll was not comparable to learning from a disc. Could humanity still be considered progressing, otherwise?

The ambushers did not reveal themselves even when he took out Moonlit Nightfalls from his dimensional pocket. Nevertheless, Gu Fei met a fist holding the hilt of the sword pointing downward with his other open hand and bowed. He called out, “Come on out. I can see all of you.”

Two masked men flashed out from behind the wall upon hearing his words. But before Gu Fei could speak a word to them, a pair of hands swiftly pulled the two back inside. At the same time, Gu Fei could hear a voice berating the two, “You gullible fools! He’s only bluffing!”

Gu Fei did not know whether to laugh or cry at that. At the same time, he felt that this bunch was much cuter than No Smile.

The group of highwaymen collectively held their breath as they looked all around them. Not one of them revealed themselves anymore.

The players walking on the street suddenly disappeared as well. Even those who had intended to take the route swiftly gave it a wide berth after seeing what was about to happen from afar. One quality that the players of Yueye City bested the players of Yunduan City was their professional attitude. While Yunduan City’s players would crowd around a fight like a litter of curious kindergarten children, Yueye City’s players would do the opposite

for their life-preservation.

The whole street abruptly became quiet. A gentle breeze whisked away a few dried leaves that lay by Gu Fei's feet. The spiraling leaves had a sort of dramatic effect to the scene. It was just too bad that this somber atmosphere got ruined by the people's somewhat comical dialogues. Feeling exasperated, Gu Fei repeated, "I can really see all of you."

"If you're not coming out, I'm leaving."

"...I'm off."

Since he was aware of the masked men's hiding places, he naturally knew which way would be deserted. Gu Fei strode toward an alley by his side that had no one lying in wait. The group of masked men was dumbfounded. Their target was a few steps away from entering their entrapment! He's just walking away! That's too shameless! Everyone was awash with grief and indignation.

A good leader was able to adapt to any unexpected situation and welcome a challenge. The Black Hand mercenary group's leader did exactly that. He revealed himself without a care in the world and hollered, "WAIT!"

Gu Fei turned his head and saw that all the masked men hiding behind the nearby wall corners, atop ledges, and behind doors had come out. It was a rather awkward sight to behold. What was originally an encirclement had now turned into a direct confrontation, with Gu Fei at one side and the group at the other.

"Who are you people?" Gu Fei asked as he took a step back.

"The Black Hand merc—ugh!" The person who answered Gu Fei's question was heavily slapped by another person beside him. The leader stared at the speaker sternly as well. The group would look pathetic if he was to kick this idiot out of the group straight away, so he restrained himself from doing so.

“What’s up?” Gu Fei asked.

No one dared reply to Gu Fei this time. The boss simply waved his hand and everyone lunged toward Gu Fei.

The game had different job classes with different fortes, after all. Right now, the ones rushing toward Gu Fei possessed melee job classes. He swept his eyes over the surging tide of players and saw many Warriors among them. Warrior was the job class Gu Fei was most wary of. Firstly, a Warrior’s heavy attack was not something Gu Fei dared to block forcefully. Secondly, Gu Fei’s attack was significantly ineffective against a Warrior since he or she wore heavy armor.

Alongside the rushing Warriors were the Thieves. These players craftily hid using Stealth behind the Warriors, thinking that Gu Fei was not aware of their ploy. Gu Fei of course had a fairly good estimate of where they were, he just could not sense their exact positions or numbers due to the chaotic environment. While the Warriors and Thieves were rushing toward Gu Fei, the Mages and Archers from afar unleashed their attacks on him.

Their teamwork is amazing! Gu Fei could tell at least this based on his accumulated melee combat experiences in-game so far.

The Archers’ arrows, some on Snipe and the rest on Double Shot, arrived first...

The Archers’ arrows on Snipe would have posed a serious challenge to Gu Fei had this ambush been staged an hour earlier. Right now, however, he had Moonlit Nightfalls and a higher level. Gu Fei’s recent level up had allowed him to add more stat points into Agility, which improved his speed by leaps and bounds. So by tilting his body sideways, Gu Fei was able to dodge the arrows whizzing by effortlessly. As for the Mages’ fireballs, he could not dodge those with a simple twist of his body as they were able to slightly track his movements. Thus, he ran across the PvP field and caused the fireballs to lose their target.

This won't do! Gu Fei anxiously thought to himself. The situation unfolding before his eyes was different from what had happened in Yunduan City. The Warriors in front were acting as meat shields for their teammates, and Gu Fei stood no chance against them when it came to frontal assault. Unfortunately, he must break through their defenses to eliminate the Mages and Archers in the rear. Aside from this bunch of attackers, there were still the Thieves on Stealth to consider; those guys were definitely waiting for an opportunity to strike at him.

Gu Fei suddenly recalled the ragged cloth tied to a bamboo pole that he had seen in one of Yueye City's grinding maps. The players currently attacking him were definitely tempered by group battles, as their solid formation showed the meaning of strength in numbers.

I can't face them head on, Gu Fei thought as he sprinted toward that alleyway he had chosen earlier.

"Ah! He's fleeing again!" someone from the mercenary group yelled. Earlier, everyone had assumed that Gu Fei was trying to get away when he headed to that alleyway. However, against their expectation, he readily returned when their leader shouted, "WAIT!". And right now, when he seemed to be taking on their group, he suddenly bolted away again. Why is he so unpredictable?! He's so shameless! everyone thought.

"Quickly pursue him!" the boss ordered and everyone rushed to the alley.

Gu Fei madly dashed forward for a bit. After a while, he faced backward and revealed a victorious smile.

Gu Fei observed the group's formation slowly changing. This change was due to the opponents' varied speed in accordance to their stat point allocation. While the formation was still orderly, the composition itself had changed.

The ones running ahead of the pack were now the Thieves on

Fleetfoot. If the job classes were to be ranked based on speed, an Archer would be first, a Thief would be second, a Knight would be third, and a Mage would be fourth. The Knight job class in Parallel World had a very balanced stat point distribution, with nothing exceptionally good or bad. This resulted into a situation where the ideal stat allocation for Knights to be undetermined. Some Knights had focused on Agility, which allowed them to run faster than Mages. As for the Mages, they were obviously not crazy enough to allocate most of their stat points into Agility unlike a certain guy.

At the moment, the Warriors were the slowest among the bunch of players chasing after Gu Fei. These meat shields had basically been demoted to rear guards along the way.

Gu Fei kept looking back as he ran. The Thieves on Fleetfoot were indeed amazing, gradually managing to catch up to him. The Thieves chasing after Gu Fei saw him as a trapped mouse; naturally, they never expected him to turn back and confront them.

Gu Fei roughly measured the pace of the Thieves behind him while silently counting, One, two, three... Turn!

Gu Fei suddenly stopped running away and turned around. He then wielded his sword and unleashed a horizontal chop – the first move in Gu Fei's inherited sword style, the Fuyun Chop.

Chopping was not up the alley of a sword, yet Gu Fei's move actually brought the blade's specialty into play: its two sharp edges.

Some said that the move should be executed while resembling a drifting cloud. This was to make the attack's trajectory be unpredictable to an opponent. Gu Fei as a young child did not understand this concept and simply thought that it sounded cool. Now that he was quite proficient at kung fu, he felt that this statement was somewhat nonsensical. If one wanted to chop an opponent, then one should just do so. Why should one waste

energy coming up with a way to instill doubt about the cut's trajectory? The statement might still serve a purpose if a sword's two edges possessed a slight incongruity. And yet, a sword would be considered as defective if that were to be the case. Gu Fei reckoned that the move's creator must have been bullied a lot by saber wielders, prompting him to create a move that could not be executed using sabers.

Whatever the case might be, Gu Fei's sword attack right now was like a drifting cloud, formless and unpredictable. The two Thieves did not even have time to defend against that single chop and were swiftly cut quite deeply by it.

The two cried as they retreated. Gu Fei followed his chop with a stab as he rushed toward them. Suddenly, the stab slowed down halfway and pierced a Thief somewhere inconsequential instead.

I still have some PK points left from before! If I go on a killing spree, I'll never be able to clear them off! Gu Fei suddenly thought.

Chapter 70 - Showing Mercy

Gu Fei's 15 PK points had dropped by 5 points after spending more than ten hours in-game. Currently, he was left with just 10 PK points. But if he were to kill these players before him, his PK value would surely reach a new height. The legend of 27149 has been usurped by another legend of 27149... That's just absurd, Gu Fei thought to himself.

However, the more absurd thing here was that Gu Fei still did not know why these masked men were attacking him. They had barely spoken a word to Gu Fei, and then they immediately started raining attacks on him. The online gaming world was really too unreal – nobody even needed an excuse to assault another person.

Worried that his PK value would increase, Gu Fei decided to let the viciously beaten Thief go. Moonlit Nightfalls had a high damage output. This was more evident since his two opponents had the Thief job class, which was known for its low HP, and could barely withstand Moonlit Nightfalls' strikes. Right now, the Thief on the right, who had been cut twice by the sword, was waiting for his impending doom by the next attack. When the attack from Gu Fei did not arrive, the Thief hurriedly ran back to his group.

"What's the matter?" At that moment, a few more members of the group had arrived at the alleyway. The sight that greeted them was of their buddy running toward their direction instead of chasing after Gu Fei.

"I almost got killed," the Thief said in a shaky voice as he reached them.

"How?" everyone asked, feeling stunned. Thinking about Gu Fei's insanely fast running speed, they somewhat deduced that he had put a majority of his stat points into Agility. The more experienced members of the group even concluded that Gu Fei was a Knight, seeing as he was wielding a sword. This resulted into the

person who had earlier said that Gu Fei was a Mage to earn a few glares from his teammates. But even though the guy was a Knight, he should not possess such a high damage output, especially since he had added most of his stats into Agility. Therefore, the source of his monstrous strength should be that sword in his hand.

“Scary. If he’d used Blessing of Strength, I would’ve already been dead,” The Thief, who was left with just a sliver of HP, could feel his heart thumping fast at the thought.

After a short while, the second Thief, who had received Gu Fei’s attack, made his way to the group as well. His face wore a terrified look as he howled, “Quick! Heal me!”

However, all the Priests were still far behind the group, as their job class had inherently low Agility.

“How much of his HP did you reduce?” someone asked.

“Reduce, my *ss! Only my HP got reduced!” the Thief snarled.

Everyone looked at one another. Gu Fei was just right in front of them, yet no one dared to approach him after hearing their accounts.

While they were standing there in a daze, a scream reached their ears from just ahead. A Thief tried to attack Gu Fei by getting near him while on Stealth. Unfortunately for the Thief, Gu Fei had long known of his presence. Thus, he was easily taken care of in one or two moves by Gu Fei. The Thief hurriedly scampered back toward his fellow mercenary members with barely a sliver of HP left.

“Archers!” a Thief shouted to the bunch of Archers that had just arrived at the alleyway.

Gu Fei no longer wished to tangle with this group of players. He turned around and started running toward the log-off point once more, fighting off a few persistent Thieves along the way.

“GO! GO! GO!” the Thieves shouted their trademark battle cry as they pushed the Archers forward. The Archers chased after Gu Fei

as they shot arrows at him.

The Archers were unable to use their current strongest skill, Snipe, while moving, so most of them could only shoot normal arrows at Gu Fei. A few outstanding Archers managed to fire off arrows using their low-level skill, Power Shot, which dealt a higher damage than a normal arrow. Unfortunately, Power Shot could not pose a threat to Gu Fei. He easily turned to a corner at the alley exit under their hail of arrows without getting hit even once.

“Don’t let him escape!” An Archer who had added most of his stat points to Agility was the closest to catching up to Gu Fei, and he yelled on to inspire the fellow mercenary members behind him. Leaning his body sideways, he leaped forward and drew the bow mid-air. Obviously, his shooting stance was more for the purpose of looking cool in front of his buddies than sending an arrow to Gu Fei.

Actually, the system provided Archers support when it came to shooting arrows. Since players even needed basic guidance regarding the bow’s proper use, they would naturally require the system’s assistance to shoot an arrow accurately. However, this did not mean that the system would ‘thoroughly’ and ‘always’ correct the players’ aim. So when this Archer attempted to shoot at such a difficult angle that even Olympic medalists would not dare try, the system harshly left him to his own devices. The Archer managed to draw his bow at its full length mid-air, yet he could not locate his shooting target. Without a second thought, he still let loose an arrow. After all, he was just doing this to look cool in front of the others.

What followed this shot was a chop that came out of nowhere. Gu Fei cleaved downward with his two hands on Moonlit Nightfalls.

The poor Archer did not get to finish his ‘cool’ move. While he did successfully leap in the air, his stance could only be considered perfect if he followed it up with a somersault. But before he could execute the last part of his performance, Gu Fei had already sent a

slash his way, causing him to lose his balance and fall to the ground rather inelegantly.

Too shameless! the Archer thought to himself.

So reckless! Gu Fei thought to himself. He had nearly gotten hit by that arrow.

“Stop! Beware of an ambush!” The few Archers following that ostentatious Archer stretched out their hands to stop the ones behind them from proceeding forward.

The flailing Archer on the ground felt angry when he heard their warning. He was only lying on the ground and was not dead yet! How could they readily give up on him? He had just wanted to look cool earlier, yet he ended up testing the water for them. “F*ck you all! Come save me, already!” he yelled indignantly.

The quick-witted players standing behind did not dare expose themselves even with his remark. They could see the Archer’s flailing legs near the alley exit, so one of the braver players dashed forward and caught the Archer’s flailing legs, dragging him back into the alley. “Whew! That was a close call!” The person praised himself, as he wiped non-existent sweat off his forehead with his hand. Had he acted any slower, the flailing Archer would have been decapitated.

Unfortunately, they could no longer determine Gu Fei’s next direction now that all of them were staying hidden in this alleyway. Everyone waited for a few seconds before tentatively asking, “Is he still there?”

Nobody dared to take a look. If the opponent was still behind that corner of the wall, then the first person to peek would have to fight with him. Could an Archer survive a melee? Nocking an arrow, drawing a bow, and firing an arrow required time and preparation. Hence, any form of assault from the enemy could easily disrupt the shooting preparation of any average Archer.

“Retreat,” someone whispered. A few of the mercenary members started edging backward. They could at least put some distance between them and Gu Fei by doing so.

“I’ll count to three and we’ll all rush out together. This way, he won’t know which one to cut down,” a person suggested.

“Good idea!”

“One... two... three! GO! GO! GO!” the person yelled, hoping to unnerve Gu Fei with their trademark battle cry.

“F*ck me, where is he?” Gu Fei’s figure could not be seen anywhere when they finally exited the alleyway.

There was quite a distance between the two ends of the adjoining alley. Gu Fei could not possibly reach its other end and turn to another direction in just a short while. The Archers were stumped. When the Thieves finally caught up to them, they all analyzed the situation and still could not figure out how Gu Fei had disappeared.

“Did he forcefully log off?” someone speculated.

It was possible to forcefully log off from the game. However, it was dangerous so almost no one dared to do so. The game officials had stated before that some progress might not be saved if the players forcefully logged off; as for how much progress would be left unsaved, nobody actually knew.

The Mages and Warriors that had just arrived tried to join in on the search as well. And yet, all of them did not know where to begin the search. They all stared blankly at the deserted alleyway in front of them.

“Attention to all divisions!” the leader said on the mercenary group channel, “Our target has mysteriously vanished. Immediately report it if you see him.”

Those who were present over there entered the adjoining alleyway and examined it. Suddenly, someone shouted, “Ah! He probably went up the rooftop!”

Everything suddenly made sense to them. The houses lining up this alleyway were not exactly tall. The walls on both sides were not far from each other as well, making it easy for someone to climb up them by spreading his arms and legs sideways and shimmying upward. The man, who had mentioned this point, demonstrated it himself. Easily managing to scale the walls and get on to a rooftop, he looked around and said, “I don’t see anyone up here. I think he’s run off far away already.”

“Don’t worry. As long as he’s in Yueye City, we’ll definitely capture him sooner or later,” the group leader said confidently.

At this point, the Thieves that had taken quite a beating from Gu Fei began to describe his swordplay.

“He halved my HP with just one strike! Who said he’s an all-Agility player? I almost got insta-killed by his normal attack! F*ck, if he’s a Warrior, one attack is enough to insta-kill me!” a player said.

The Black Hand’s group leader happened to be a Warrior. Upon hearing about the sword’s high damage output, he became more spirited in his search. He repeated his orders on the mercenary channel to keep searching for a man wearing a seemingly black mage robe.

Seven minutes later, the leader received a report. Someone saw a similar individual entering a safe zone and going offline.

“Which safe zone is that?” the leader asked his members.

“Zone A in the Knights’ Barracks,” someone answered.

“Monitor that place in shifts. We must not let that guy get away!” the leader ordered. If the target was an average player, he would call this hunt off to not waste any more of their time. But knowing that Gu Fei possessed a top-grade sword, he could not just let him go.

“Someone head over there and keep an eye on things! The rest of

you, head over to Sixth Night tavern; drinks are on me!” the leader declared grandly.

The group gathered in Sixth Night tavern as they waited for Gu Fei to come online.

Gu Fei prepared to sleep after going offline. As he was lying in bed, he started to mull things over. Once Gu Fei had decided to kill No Smile, he truly hunted the latter until No Smile went offline. One could say that Gu Fei was not able to keep things bottled up inside him for long. At the moment, everything he was doing in Parallel World felt a bit troublesome due to his PK value. It was as if there was fish bone lodged in his throat and he could not get rid of it no matter what. This feeling of discomfort more or less summed up his view of his present ordeal, and it had only gotten worse after logging off.

Gu Fei knew that this quirk of his would be diagnosed by doctors as a minor case of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Right now, he forcefully tried to go to sleep by telling himself to forget about his current dilemma.

When Gu Fei went online the next day, the only difference in-game was that some drunk men now littered the Sixth Night tavern.

“I bet that guy’ll show himself in the next hour!” one of them said with glazed eyes.

“Yeah! That b*st*rd! Making us wait for a whole day and night. We’re definitely not letting him off!” The person used in-game time as measure when he made this remark.

The person who was stationed outside the log-off point had brought several bottles of liquor with him as well. He drank the liquor in all of the bottles as he waited for Gu Fei’s appearance. So by the time Gu Fei strutted out and stood in front of him, he had long fallen asleep coiled up in a fetal position by a wall column.

Since spending time in the safe zone could reduce his PK value as well, Gu Fei did not hurriedly get out. He had a matter that he needed to make sure of, and he could only accomplish this undisturbed within the safe zone.

Before logging in to Parallel World, Gu Fei had tried searching for information on the game's official website regarding the unfamiliar terms 'Spell Mastery', 'Sword Aptitude', and 'Spell Aptitude', yet he came up with nothing. With no other options, he could only bother Fleeting Smile again.

Chapter 71 - Endless Robbery

“Are you there?” Gu Fei asked Fleeting Smile.

“...” was Fleeting Smile’s reply.

“?” Gu Fei answered that with a question mark.

“One doesn’t visit a temple without a cause. What’s your problem this time?” Fleeting Smile asked.

“Sword Aptitude, Spell Aptitude, and Spell Mastery... I found these additional traits on my equipment. What do they do?” Gu Fei asked.

“This...” Fleeting Smile hesitated.

“You can’t say?” Gu Fei asked.

“No, it's not that. I just never expected anyone to encounter these item traits so soon,” Fleeting Smile explained.

“Tell me about them, then,” Gu Fei requested.

“You know that there’s no job-class restriction on the weapons in Parallel World. That essentially means that anyone can equip any equipment,” Fleeting Smile began.

“Mhm,” Gu Fei replied.

“But that’s not entirely accurate,” Fleeting Smile continued, “Traits on low-grade weapons don’t factor much, so we decided not to put those traits on such weapons. But it’s different for higher-grade weapons; they have something called ‘Aptitude’, which decides how eligible players are to unleash the weapons’ full potential. ‘Spell Aptitude’ and ‘Sword Aptitude’ belong to that category.”

“How’s Aptitude calculated?” Gu Fei asked.

“A character’s Aptitude depends on its stat point distribution. Each of the job classes has an innate Aptitude bonus for the

different in-game weapons. For example, Mages have higher Spell Aptitude, Thieves have higher Dagger Aptitude, Archers have higher Bow Aptitude, and Warriors have high Aptitude for every weapon except for magic weapons. Of course, each weapon has different Aptitude requirement. In short, if a player's character lacks the necessary Aptitude for a respective high-grade weapon, it will be impossible to unleash the weapon's full potential," Fleeting Smile mentioned a lot of details, so he inquired at the end, "Did you understand all that?"

"I see," Gu Fei realized something. When he had used Moonlit Nightfalls to attack back then, he could feel that it did not deal the maximum damage possible. Since he had always been using his kung fu to achieve maximum damage, Gu Fei just thought that his lackluster moves resulted into reduced damage. As it turned out, it was the weapon's Sword Aptitude requirement that had caused it. In this sense, Sword Aptitude and Spell Aptitude were not traits that strengthened him but requirements set for the equipment's use instead.

Fleeting Smile continued explaining, "As for the relation between stat point distribution and a character's Aptitude, it's related to the job classes. There's no way I can explain that complex connection in one sitting. To sum all up, the players will be fine as long as they allocate stat points according to their respective job classes' specialty. As for the other stats, they'll just have to resolve them through other means."

"Wait. Based on this method of calculation, even if someone has the suitable job class, he or she still needs to reach a very high level just to be able to wield a weapon with high Aptitude requirement, right? The players' Aptitude will never reach the Aptitude requirement of the weapons if their stats are insufficient, then!" Gu Fei surmised.

"It's not that a player can't wield it... but more like the weapon's full potential can't be unleashed," Fleeting Smile clarified.

“Isn’t that the same thing? It’s just a different form of level or stat requirement for a weapon,” Gu Fei said.

“That’s not right either. It’s more like a player’s Aptitude decides how much of a weapon’s traits he or she can tap. So a player can still wield a weapon despite not reaching its Aptitude requirement. Let’s say a sword’s Aptitude requirement is 200%, while your character’s Sword Aptitude is only at 180%. With that 20% gap, it’ll be as if the weapon only has 80% of the attack power listed on its traits window. The difference between lacking just 10% and about 20% is significant, you know? With 20% less of the required Aptitude, you can visibly feel the weapon’s reduced damage. And if your Sword Aptitude reaches 199%, you won’t even notice the damage reduction, since the damage that you can cause is almost the same as when you’ve fully reached the sword’s Aptitude requirement.”

“So how do I calculate my character’s Aptitude?” Gu Fei asked.

“That’s not something we plan to announce. We want the players to research and find that out on their own,” Fleeting Smile replied.

Gu Fei was speechless for a moment.

“Are you doing fine in Yueye City?” Honestly, it was rare for Fleeting Smile to engage in small talk with Gu Fei.

“Why would I be fine here?! The way things are in Yueye City is horrible. Players ambush me without a word even when I’m just walking down the street. Where’s the justice in that? Shouldn’t you guys be keeping an eye on all these?” Gu Fei complained.

“If we’re going to start keeping an eye on things, we’ll probably start with you first. You’re the most wanted player in the entire gaming server, and yet you can walk around freely. Where’s the justice in that? Is anyone keeping an eye on you?” Fleeting Smile countered.

Gu Fei was momentarily speechless once more. After a bit, he

replied, “Still, players shouldn’t go around cutting people with no rhyme or reason!”

“You’re a fugitive, so everyone can rightfully kill you...” Fleeting Smile remarked.

“Don’t I even have the right to defend myself if others attack me?” Gu Fei already noticed the issue.

“Originally, you have. But not anymore,” Fleeting Smile pretended to hedge.

“Why’s that?”

“Because you’re a fugitive; everyone can rightfully kill you...” Fleeting Smile replied matter-of-factly.

Gu Fei was speechless once again.

“Stay safe out there!”

“I protest! I’m also a player. I shouldn’t be discriminated just because of my PK value,” Gu Fei appealed loudly.

“What do you want us to do? Reward your actions for taking a player’s life eight times in a single day?” Fleeting Smile retorted.

“At least... Give me a chance to atone...” Gu Fei said helplessly.

“You can! Stay in jail to atone,” Fleeting Smile said.

“Besides jail time?”

“The only option left is to resolve your crimes through meritorious service. Accept a new ‘Bounty Mission’ and chase after people with PK value. While players will normally be rewarded with coins and experience points, you’ll be rewarded with PK value reduction. Your targets’ PK value will be the amount deducted from yours,” Fleeting Smile explained.

Gu Fei laughed, “Stopping killings with killings, are we?”

“Nope. It’s killing one another. We’re encouraging bad players like you to mutually kill one another!” Fleeting Smile clarified.

Gu Fei was utterly dumbfounded.

“Oh. You haven’t explained to me what Spell Mastery—”

“I’ve got something on. I’ll explain that to you next time. I’m logging off now,” With that, Fleeting Smile logged off.

Gu Fei’s question was left hanging in the air.

Gu Fei looked around after his conversation with Fleeting Smile. He saw a man huddling in a corner, looking pitifully like a male version of the Little Match Girl. He walked over and asked, “Hey, buddy! How do I get to the place that offers ‘Bounty Mission’?”

The person raised his head drowsily. His breath stank of alcohol as he mumbled almost unintelligibly, “Over by 4th Night Main Street.”

“Thanks a lot!” He patted the guy on his shoulder, “Just log off if you want to sleep. It’s not comfortable to slouch over here in one corner.”

“Nah, I’m waiting for someone,” the person said, “He’s a man wearing what looks like a black mage robe. He’s a little good looking, but his actions and demeanor are nothing short of despicable. Have you seen such a person?”

“I’m sorry. That man you’re speaking of, besides the last bit, sounds exactly like me!” Gu Fei said.

“Uh?!” The still sleepy guy forcefully opened his eyes. Now that he could clearly see the person whom he was talking to, he immediately sobered up with a start. Just as he was about to say something, Gu Fei brought out a sword, slashed him once with it, and pointed the tip to his chest. Gu Fei thought that simply pointing the sword’s tip to the player would not be very threatening since they were in a game, so he reduced the person’s HP first.

“The Black Hand mercenary group, right?” Gu Fei asked.

“Ah...” The person felt petrified.

“Why’re you guys looking for me?” Gu Fei pressed on.

“Rob – Robbery...” the person stammered.

“Robbery?” Gu Fei questioned, feeling perplexed.

The person did not respond. Gu Fei noticed the blank look in his eyes. He was most likely calling for reinforcement on the conversation window. Gu Fei immediately put the sword back inside his dimensional pocket and turned around to leave.

Although the person was an enemy, the information he had provided should still be true. Gu Fei left the designated log-off point. After randomly asking a player, he found the direction to 4th Night Main Street. Since the possibility of Gu Fei getting ambushed by The Black Hand mercenary group on his way there was high, Gu Fei decided to get into a secluded corner to take off Midnight Spirit Robe and put on his beginner mage robe.

The opponents had obviously used the black mage robe as the main method to identify Gu Fei. He reckoned that by changing his equipment, the opponents would have a harder time distinguishing him from others.

With that, he strutted out the street. While a beginner mage robe was a sensitive symbol to players in Yunduan City due to the ‘Masked Slayer’ incident, it was just a common sight here in Yueye City. In fact, Gu Fei noticed that a majority of players in Yueye City favored wearing beginner equipment. It was probably because of the rampant PvP in Yueye City. The players here did not want to risk losing their equipment if they got killed.

As he was walking down the street, he suddenly received a message. He opened it and saw that it was from Brother Assist: “F*ck me. You actually reached level 31! Is there a special grinding area over there?”

“It’s not that. I just finished a chain quest. The experience points

I received are quite hefty,” Gu Fei explained.

“Chain quest...” Brother Assist muttered, “Come back and tell me more about what type of quest it is.”

“Sure.”

“Now that you’re at level 31, it’ll be easier for you to hide your identity,” Brother Assist said.

“Really? Why’s that?”

“Players with lower level can’t use Appraisal on players with a higher level. Since there’re only a few level 31 players in the game right now, you don’t have to worry about the others managing to appraise your equipment or job class,” Brother Assist explained in detail.

“So that’s how it works,” Gu Fei’s eyes shone brightly, “That’s great, then!”

“Yup. If not for the fact that you’re the highly sought after Fugitive 27149, you’d have no problem swaggering down to the Bounty Assignment Hall and obtaining a ‘Bounty Mission’.”

Gu Fei laughed, “I may be Fugitive 27149 in Yunduan City, but over here I’m a nobody. Actually, I’m just about to head over to the Bounty Assignment Hall to obtain a ‘Bounty Mission’.”

“Where’re you?” Brother Assist asked, curious.

“Yueye City. The players will arrive at this new city once they cross over the Oolong Mountain Range,” Gu Fei said.

“I see. How’re things over there?” Brother Assist asked.

“Extremely chaotic. The streets are filled with fights and even robbery—f*ck! I’m being robbed right now! I’ll talk to you later—” Gu Fei abruptly ended their conversation.

“...” Brother Assist was left alone on the conversation window.

“Who’re you?” Gu Fei stared at the person before him.

“My name’s Coward’s Savior! I want to clarify to all that I’m not a coward!” the person thundered.

Yet another drunkard! Gu Fei sighed in his heart. “Come at me, then!” Gu Fei said, as he took out his Sacred Flames of Baptism. He decided not to use Moonlit Nightfalls for now to prevent The Black Hand mercenary group from recognizing him. He did not know, however, that the person before him was originally a member of that very same mercenary group.

Coward’s Savior assumed a fighting stance bare-handedly. Gu Fei felt stunned when he saw this. The stance was....

“Mantis Fist Style?!”

Chapter 72 - No Cowards in Kung Fu

“Kung fu produces no cowards! Your discerning eyes are worthy of my praise for recognizing the Mantis Fist Style!” remarked Coward’s Savior. His eyes shone brightly upon hearing Gu Fei’s earlier exclamation.

Gu Fei was speechless. The fighting stance for the Mantis Fist Style was very distinct, especially since this person had posed in such a proper manner. It was, therefore, not worthy enough to be complimented about having “discerning eyes”, as anyone who had seen movies featuring the style could also recognize it from a glance.

“If that’s the case...” Gu Fei put Sacred Flames of Baptism back into his dimensional pocket and assumed a fighting stance as well.

“Mantis Fist Style, too?” Coward’s Savior was stunned, immediately retorting, “Hey, man. Don’t just go around casually copying others! That’s too shameless!”

“I’m not copying you,” Gu Fei said, feeling shocked.

“Not copying me? Then, what’re you doing?” Coward’s Savior stretched his arms vertically and faced seemingly fractured fists forward. He then leaned his body forward and started swaying back and forth.

“I didn’t copy your—” Gu Fei was about to explain, but he was rudely interrupted by a yell from Coward’s Savior, “I don’t care! Let’s fight!” With that, he dashed toward Gu Fei and threw a punch right at his face.

“Your moves are a mess,” Gu Fei deflected his attacker’s fist with an open palm.

“Not bad, punk. You’ve got some moves!” Coward’s Savior’s Agility was clearly not low, as he was able to throw out a hook when his first jab had been deflected.

Gu Fei paid particular attention to Coward's Savior's footing and felt bewildered at what he saw. Gu Fei ducked to avoid the incoming fist and extended his leg, performing a basic sweep kick that toppled Coward's Savior straight to the ground.

"Do you really know the Mantis Fist Style?!" Gu Fei asked. His voice filled with skepticism.

"Of course, I do! HI-YA!" Coward's Savior still assumed the Mantis Fist Style even while he was on the ground. With a roar, he kicked up from the ground and resumed his previous stance.

Gu Fei retreated a few steps and Coward's Savior immediately dashed toward him.

"Stop!" Gu Fei shouted as he extended his hand in front of him.

Coward's Savior stopped in his tracks and asked absent-mindedly, "What?"

Gu Fei walked up to him and patted his arms, "While your upper body maintains the Seven Stars Mantis Fist Style stance, your lower body..." Gu Fei used his leg to tap each of Coward's Savior's calves and said, "Don't you know your Seven Stars footwork? Have you even properly learned the Seven Stars Mantis Fist Style?"

"What footwork?"

"Seven Stars footwork."

"What's that?"

Gu Fei was dumbfounded at this revelation. He took two steps back and pulled out Sacred Flames of Baptism once more, "Just take your weapon out!"

"Real kung fu expert depends on his fists!" Coward's Savior clenched his fists.

Gu Fei dashed toward Coward's Savior and swept the latter off his feet once more. He then began stomping on him, "I dare you to insult kung fu again! I dare you!"

“Oww—ouch! Stop stomping on me! I’ll get angry if you persist!” Coward’s Savior yelled. Gu Fe was an all-Agility Mage. When it came to close combat, his damage mostly depended on his weapon. Hence, his unarmed attacks, like stomping, were obviously not enough to penetrate Coward’s Savior’s defense. Although the player was looking pathetic at the moment, his HP remained the same.

“I’m already angry!” Gu Fei bellowed. He was well aware that his unarmed attacks dealt no damage to his opponent. But this actually meant that he did not have to worry about accidentally stomping this idiot to death and increasing his PK value. He even pulled out Moonlit Nightfalls to increase his Agility, so that he could stomp quicker on Coward’s Savior.

“YAAHHH!” Coward’s Savior howled, as his two hands held on to Gu Fei’s stomping right foot. Gu Fei was stunned when he felt the surge of a large amount of strength. He had no way of fighting it and could only watch himself be tossed high off the ground.

Gu Fei had intended to regain his balance while mid-air, yet he discovered that he did not have the strength to fight inertia. This astonishing moment lasted only for a short while, as he quickly found himself crashing onto the ground.

His HP immediately dropped by half. The fall alone had inflicted such a high damage on him. However, Gu Fei did not feel surprised by this, as he was quite familiar with this particular job class.

Coward’s Savior was a Fighter, and he had just unleashed the level 30 Fighter skill, Seismic Toss.

Coward’s Savior had used the skill while he was on the ground, so he probably did not use the move’s full strength. Halving Gu Fei’s HP with not even the skill’s full strength made it more or less comparable to an Archer’s Snipe or a Thief’s Backstab. It was a skill that could easily insta-kill low-level and low HP players.

“Ha ha ha ha ha!” Coward’s Savior immediately stood up. With

his arms akimbo, he laughed uproariously, “You forced me to use my killer move. Now you know my greatness!”

Indubitably, even calm players would have moments when they lost their temper just like how Gu Fei had just had. Gu Fei was irate by Coward’s Savior’s thoroughly unimpressive posing of the Mantis Fist stance. Because of his strong desire to stomp onto Coward’s Savior as if he was a cockroach earlier, he had thoroughly forgotten that the latter could fight back.

Gu Fei slowly got up. He dusted himself off, returned the sword back into his dimensional pocket, and turned around to leave.

Coward’s Savior stood there frozen with his fists clenched for a beat, before finally shouting as he chased Gu Fei, “Stop right there! Where do you think you’re going?”

Gu Fei turned his head, “I originally thought you know kung fu. Turns out you’re nothing but a braggart! Fine... Do whatever you want, but I’m leaving.”

“The heck! You’re totally looking down on me! Receive my attack!” Coward’s Savior yelled as he unleashed his Spurring Meteor at Gu Fei.

Gu Fei turned sideways to let the hurtling figure go past him. Coward’s Savior reacted nimbly at this by turning around and delivering an uppercut. Gu Fei took a step back, just as Coward’s Savior hurled a kick toward him. The person ended up hitting naught but air. Gu Fei then stepped in and grabbed the leg that still hung in the air and gave it a light push.

Coward’s Savior, who was standing with one leg, immediately toppled over. However, he did not actually fall far from Gu Fei, as the latter’s strength was not that great to cause that.

Coward’s Savior was a little stumped. The uppercut and kick he threw just now were not part of the Mantis Fist Style he had shown earlier. They were the level 12 and level 18 skills of the Fighter job

class. In Parallel World, a Fighter could hurl his opponent upward using Uppercut Punch and follow it up using Thrusting Kick. Spurring Meteor could then be unleashed against the opponent before he or she hit the ground. This was the Fighter job class' specialty: combo attack.

In the end, Gu Fei easily dodged all of them with just two steps.

“You know kung fu!” Coward's Savior suddenly shouted.

Gu Fei nodded.

“Please accept me as your disciple!” Coward's Savior pleaded.

“You've got to be kidding me,” Gu Fei said.

“I won't get up if you don't accept me!” Coward's Savior said as he continued to lie on the ground. He even started rolling back and forth.

The times really have changed! Gu Fei sighed. In the past, people would stay kneeling when they hoped to be apprenticed. Now, kneeling was no longer the rage. Instead, this person in front of him resolved to indefinitely roll on the ground. The action might have changed, but the words did not. They were still: “If you don't accept me as your disciple, I'll never get up!”

“Please accept me! Accept me, please!” Coward's Savior devoutly rolled on the ground as he shouted. He lifted his head to take a look, only to find that Gu Fei had already left.

Coward's Savior did a kip up and raised a clenched fist, “I'll definitely apprentice myself under a master and learn kung fu. Because... kung fu produces no cowards!”

At this moment, Gu Fei was already two blocks away from Coward's Savior. It's rare to find someone so passionate toward kung fu like him. Too bad there's something wrong with his head, Gu Fei sighed regretfully. Instead of embarrassing himself together with that man over there, it was better for him to get away as soon as possible.

Asking a few more players along the way, Gu Fei finally got to Yueye City's 4th Night Main Street. The Bounty Assignment Hall was huge, yet it was crammed with players. This was not surprising given the players' passion for PvP in Yueye City. Many of them often gathered in the hall with different intentions, poring over the list and waiting.

Everyone in the hall was still raining praises toward the top fugitive, 27149. Although Gu Fei's PK value had decreased by 5 points, no other players in-game had a two-digit PK value, making his 10 PK points stand out. Gu Fei was very worried that the players around him would pick up the 'Bounty Mission' targeting him. Luckily, such a scenario did not occur.

Gu Fei checked the Wanted Players list and arranged it by region. The player ranked first on the Wanted Players list for Yueye City had a PK value of 4 points, with serial number 29527. Gu Fei did not hesitate and took this mission.

The system immediately informed Gu Fei about the pertinent rules of the 'Bounty Mission'.

'Bounty Mission' could not be canceled, and only a single target could be chosen each time. The mission would automatically be suspended when the target's PK value was reduced to 0 or when another player accomplished it.

The coordinates of 29527 were sent to Gu Fei not long after he left the Quest Assignment Hub.

Gu Fei braced himself and ran toward the indicated coordinates.

Based on the direction he was going and the changes in the coordinates, Gu Fei deduced that the target was somewhere within the city. Five minutes had passed, so the coordinates refreshed, and Gu Fei was taken aback by what he saw. The coordinates displayed were still the same, which meant that the person had stayed in the same spot for the entirety of the five minutes.

That's way too arrogant, Gu Fei thought to himself, I absconded from Yunduan City due to my PK value, yet this person here just squats in the same place. Is he not afraid of being hunted?

Gu Fei felt that this was strange and suspected that it was a trap. While he was considering the possibility of this, Gu Fei found that he had arrived at the coordinates. He looked up and saw a tavern ahead.

Is he really drinking in the tavern? Or is this a trap? Gu Fei did not immediately enter the tavern. He circled the establishment twice first.

Gu Fei watched quite a number of players come and go, appearing quite normal. He decided to re-evaluate the situation. Gu Fei was able to spot a person with serial number 29527 inside. The person seemed oblivious to the fact that someone had taken up the 'Bounty Mission' to subdue him. Because of this, Gu Fei's assumption of this being a trap was somewhat dispelled.

Gu Fei entered the tavern after preparing himself mentally. The system-operated tavern's lounge was filled with many tables and chairs. Gu Fei's eyes swept through the crowd until they stopped at Fugitive 29527 who was sitting, drinking, and chatting with a group of people. The players entering and exiting the tavern would at most sweep their gazes over that group. Gu Fei did not know whether these players knew that the most wanted fugitive in Yueye City was among them or not. All he knew was that nobody cared about the player's presence.

Just what's going on here? Gu Fei tried to understand the current situation, as he walked up to the bar and ordered a glass of liquor from the NPC bartender. He drank a mouthful of it and turned to look at 29527 once more. The person was still sitting and chatting with some people in that table. Gu Fei was within two meters of him, and was almost an arm's length away to ending his life.

Screw it! Gu Fei made up his mind. Although he felt that the

whole thing was a little strange, he still had to brave this den of tigers for the sake of reducing his PK value.

Gu Fei walked straight toward Fugitive 29527 and struck with all his might using the Sacred Flames of Baptism in his hand. Fugitive 29527 fell down to the ground with that cut. Loud exclamations could be heard from the surrounding players. Fugitive 29527 lay sprawled on the floor beside his flipped over stool, yet he made no attempt to resist Gu Fei's attack. His face displayed a look of confusion.

What's with that look? Did he not make any preparations and just sit here awaiting capture? Although Gu Fei felt that this whole matter was beyond strange, his hand did not stop attacking. He immediately followed up his initial slash with two more cuts as he shouted, "You're 29527, right?!"

Chapter 73 - Framing Others

Fugitive 29527 sure was unlucky. Sacred Flames of Baptism's 30% fire attack got procced in all the three slashes Gu Fei had sent his way. Fugitive 29527 was engulfed by fire before he could speak a word, fading away with a confused look on his face. The disappearing stream of white light was accompanied by the sound of a slamming cell door, which indicated that the player had been sent to jail. If a wanted player was killed by someone who had accepted the 'Bounty Mission', he or she would be sent directly to one of the system-managed prisons and would not be subjected to a death penalty akin to dropping a level.

One could say that trying to evade capture in Parallel World was similar to resisting arrest in reality – it was considered as a more serious offense. The imprisonment duration for the fugitives who had been caught was different to the fugitives who had turned themselves in. If the players with PK value turned themselves in, they would lose 1 PK point for every one hour. If the fugitives were killed and forcefully put into jail, they would lose 1 PK point for every two hours. This was the same as dropping PK points while fleeing in the wild; the only difference was that the players would lose their freedom during imprisonment. It was a truly sad fate.

Fugitive 29527 possessed 4 PK points. This meant that he would have to stay in prison for eight hours. His only consolation was that he would not be subjected to the penalty of dying.

Soon after the player's death, Gu Fei received a system notification. ['Bounty Mission' for Fugitive 29527 has been completed! Player can now go claim the reward at the Quest Assignment Hub.] Gu Fei breathed a sigh of relief. The wanted player's confused look had made Gu Fei wonder whether he got the right person or not. It had even caused him to hesitate in his attacks ever so slightly. Now that he received the system notification, he was finally at ease.

After putting away Sacred Flames of Baptism, he headed to the bar counter while rubbing his hands together in satisfaction. He only took a sip from the drink he had ordered earlier, so he decided to finish it first before leaving the tavern to retrieve the reward.

The people sitting at the surrounding tables near Fugitive 29527 a while ago stared at Gu Fei strangely. He returned their odd gazes with a smile and a nod. As he arrived at the bar counter, he noticed that everyone was still staring at him. He started to consider whether his actions just then were too domineering. As he pondered on this, he lifted his glass toward the other tavern patrons as a sign of goodwill.

Someone kicked a table over right after that, producing a loud bang. The players from the surrounding tables seemed to have been jolted to reality by that sound, as the muddled look on their faces had turned into an angry expression. Their anger was of course directed at Gu Fei. The remaining tavern patrons apparently possessed an acute awareness toward PvPs just like the other players of Yueye City, as they all hurriedly left in bulk upon sensing trouble in the air.

“Oh, hi there, Master Kang! Is that really you? I didn’t notice you’re here, too!” Gu Fei’s eyes sharpened. When he spotted a familiar face among the crowd, he did not hesitate to greet him loudly.

Master Kang’s face paled like a ghost, as he hurriedly replied, “Who are you?! I don’t know you!”

“I’m that guy! You don’t remember me?” Gu Fei answered, as he swiftly approached Master Kang. Once he arrived beside Master Kang, he grabbed him by the shoulder, “What’re you standing still for? Let’s make a run for it!”

“You screwed me up big time, bro!” Master Kang cried as he made his way outside. Gu Fei had reacted faster than him and was already outside.

“F*ck! He ran away!” The bunch of angry-looking people inside the tavern was jolted to reality once more at the sight of the two’s fleeing figures. They continued hollering as they proceeded to rush outside.

Gu Fei was running a few meters ahead of Master Kang. The bunch of players who had hurried outside saw Gu Fei and Master Kang getting further and further away. Someone yelled, “OVER THERE! THERE’RE TWO OF THEM, DON’T LET EVEN ONE ESCAPE!”

Master Kang cried in anguish again when he heard that. He roared to Gu Fei who was in front, “Why did you have to greet me?! Couldn’t you have pretended to not see me?!”

Gu Fei felt very remorseful, “Sorry. I was trying to distract them.”

“Who’re those guys, anyway?” Gu Fei asked as he turned his head around. The group chasing after the two seemed to lack speed. It was clear that they could not keep up with Gu Fei and Master Kang.

“They’re members of Past Deeds, the largest guild in this city. The guy you just killed is called Silver Moon. He’s their guild leader,” Master Kang explained dejectedly. He did not forget to lament at the end, “What’s with you killing him all of a sudden?!”

“I’m doing a ‘Bounty Mission’,” Gu Fei answered.

“Why him?! There’re clearly so many others on the Wanted Players list?!”

“He’s got 4 PK points. It’s the highest,” Gu Fei replied.

“Can’t blame you for that,” Master Kang sighed as they kept running, “IGN isn’t stated on the ‘Bounty Mission’. Plus, you didn’t know Silver Moon since you’re not from around here. Why do you think he had the guts to sit and drink like that when he’s got 4 PK points? He knew that a player could only fall back upon

finding out that the mission's target was him. A 'Bounty Mission' isn't worth that much trouble. How can a player survive if he or she pisses off Past Deeds Guild?"

"Oh... I see, I see," Gu Fei understood everything now. The reason that guy had such a confused look on his face when he died was most likely this. Gu Fei had of course thought of such a possibility. He just did not care either way. After all, he had always been up for a challenge.

"It's fine even if you killed him. But you should've left once you're done! You actually dared stay behind and have a drink. You even greeted me! You've screwed me up big time! How am I supposed to live here from now on?!" Master Kang wept bitterly.

"It's fine... You can come with me to Yunduan City two days later. Surely, they won't pursue us all the way there?"

"It's not fine at all, and you can never be too sure," Master Kang answered sullenly.

"Sh*t, really?!" Gu Fei felt shocked.

"You don't know how those PvP fanatics' minds work. All they think about is coming up with an excuse to engage in PvPs. It's even possible for them to consider hunting someone over a span of a thousand miles as cool," Master Kang explained.

"Cool, my *ss! I think we've already ditched them," Gu Fei looked back and saw that not one of their pursuers could be seen around.

The two's speed was not slow since Master Kang was a Thief and Gu Fei was an all-Agility Mage. Apparently, the group of pursuers lacked Agility-based individuals, so they could not catch up to the duo.

"What do we do now? We might already be surrounded," Master Kang asked, terrified.

"Here's what you do: change your attire and cover your face like this," Gu Fei instructed Master Kang, as he covered his face with a

piece of cloth and put on Midnight Spirit Robe.

“Cover my face? Won’t that be too obvious?” Master Kang asked.

“Nah. Lots of players are wearing masks in the city today,” Gu Fei said, refraining to mention that those who had masked their faces were actually after his life. He was somewhat annoyed that he had attracted those robbers toward him when he had been keeping a low profile all this while. He had gotten rid of a PvP fanatic for the people, yet he ended up provoking trouble for himself. Gu Fei, however, conveniently neglected to consider the fact that he was more of a PvP fanatic than Silver Moon if he compared his PK points with the latter.

Master Kang followed his advice. After changing his equipment and covering his face with a piece of cloth, he swept his eyes around them twice, “Alright, I’m ready. Let’s leave Yueye City and make our way to Yunduan City!”

“No can do!” Gu Fei rejected him on the spot.

“Why?”

Gu Fei confessed, “I’ve got PK points, too. It’ll be troublesome if I return to Yunduan City right now. That’s actually why I’m here in Yueye City. I’m trying to escape from all that heat.”

Master Kang’s expression could not be seen as his face was covered by a piece of cloth. However, he had retreated by a few steps before exclaiming, “So you’re a PvP fanatic, too! Can it be that you’re actually THAT top killer in Yunduan City?!”

“Of course, not! I’ve only got a little PK points on me,” Gu Fei denied vehemently, seeing that Master Kang was very sensitive when it came to PvP. He must have suffered a lot because of PvP, so he had developed a strong aversion toward it.

“In that case, I’ll head to Yunduan City first. I just have to trek through the Oolong Mountain Range, right?” Master Kang asked.

“Yeah!” Gu Fei nodded his head.

“Be careful now! Let’s meet in Yunduan City again if there’s a chance,” Master Kang’s voice sounded as if he would never see Gu Fei again. He turned around and disappeared into a street after saying this.

He even activated his Stealth! Why bother covering his face and changing his clothes when he has that? He’s far too cautious, Gu Fei thought to himself, as he turned around to leave as well. He headed to 4th Night Main Street where the Bounty Assignment Hall was located. He just caught himself a fugitive and had yet to claim his reward!

He hurried toward the Bounty Assignment Hall, which was situated inside the Quest Assignment Hub. The players on the streets looked curiously at his getup.

“I’m from The Black Hand mercenary group,” Gu Fei explained to the confused players.

Everyone was still perplexed. Gu Fei had been saying that on his way to the destination. He felt slightly worried for the members of The Black Hand now. That mercenary group would probably be the main suspect whenever some masked figures caused a scene in Yueye City.

The Quest Assignment Hub was just ahead of Gu Fei. He peeked from a corner of a wall before swiftly retreating to the alleyway he had been hiding. Gu Fei spotted a few familiar faces brimming with killing intent. They were the same Past Deeds’ guild members back at the tavern. They were currently lying in wait at the hub entrance, fiddling with the weapons in their hands.

They seemed to know that the one who had accepted the ‘Bounty Mission’ to slay their guild leader would have to come back here to claim his reward. Hence, they had resolved to wait for Gu Fei’s arrival here instead of chasing after him all over the city. However, Gu Fei could not understand why they chose to make themselves visible in broad daylight instead of hiding inside the hub. Did the

players in Yueye City possess relatively low IQ levels?

People with low IQ levels tended to resolve issues through violence just like animals. This was quite similar to how things were in Yueye City. Gu Fei now thought that it should be relatively safe for him to walk over there with the opponents' levels of IQ.

With that thought in mind, Gu Fei walked out from the alleyway and headed straight toward the Quest Assignment Hub.

The cloth on his face immediately attracted much attention.

"I'm from The Black Hand mercenary group," Gu Fei said to those who were eyeing him.

"I'm from The Black Hand mercenary group," Gu Fei specifically said this to the Past Deeds' guild member who was fiddling with his sword when he arrived at the Quest Assignment Hub's entrance.

"Scram!" the person said impatiently to Gu Fei.

For the first time in his life, Gu Fei felt overjoyed to be yelled at. He happily walked inside the hub. As he claimed his reward, the system notified him that 4 PK points had been cleared off from his PK value. He proceeded to choose a new 'Bounty Mission'. Unfortunately for him, there was no longer any big target like Fugitive 29527 on the Wanted Players list. The rest of the fugitives only possessed 1 PK point each. Everyone who was here for the 'Bounty Mission' could only sigh at this. They felt embarrassed that the average PK points here were rather low considering that the city had such a prevalent PvP culture.

Gu Fei randomly picked a new 'Bounty Mission' and made his way behind the players. He then changed his clothes into the beginner mage robe and covered his face with a piece of cloth when nobody was looking. After changing his getup, he exited the hall and said to the guy fiddling with his sword once more, "I'm from The Black Hand mercenary group."

“F*ck!” The guy sprang up with his sword in hand, “There’s no end in sight for you lot!”

“I. Slew. Your. Boss,” Gu Fei said every word clearly before promptly turning away to escape.

“Oh, sh*t! It’s that guy! Don’t let him get away!” the guy bellowed.

Chapter 74 - Consequences of Being a Blabbermouth

Gu Fei was... very wrong.

He realized how foolish he was for belittling his opponents' IQ levels when a single bellow from the guy watching the Quest Assignment Hub's entrance had caused countless players to emerge from the four corners of the street like a volcanic eruption.

Gu Fei had let his guard down when he assumed that those guarding the entrance were mere knuckleheads. After all, they were just lying in wait for him where he could clearly see them. If Gu Fei had not seen their foolish action, he might have remained cautious. And before daring to enter the Quest Assignment Hub, he would have probably asked someone to check if there were any Past Deeds' guild members inside.

The opponents must have been wary of something like this happening, so they had arranged for a few dumb-looking members to stand guard by the entrance. Meanwhile, the real ambush had been secretly prepared. A majority of the players would be less alert upon seeing that such an idiotic approach was used to deal with them. They would even think that everything was under control, and they only had to figure out a way to deal with the situation.

Gu Fei belonged to that category, and that was the first reason why his judgment had gone awry.

The second reason, in which Gu Fei was truly at fault, was how he acted like a blabbermouth when he had already disguised himself. The opposing players might have been suspicious of his getup, but they would not have revealed their ambush with just that. After all, they were unsure if it was really him. If they wrongly confronted Gu Fei and the real culprit was lurking nearby, their ambush would be seen through. The opposing players could

only test the water by getting one or two to approach Gu Fei. However, doing that would surely cause Gu Fei to be on guard. That was supposed to be the flaw behind their arrangement.

And yet, Gu Fei had unthinkingly revealed himself to his opponents before they even started to test the water with him. Was there still a need to remain hesitant? The opposing players immediately carried out their ambush, and Gu Fei, the fish, was thoroughly hooked.

The Past Deeds' guild members were very serious in carrying out their psychological warfare against Gu Fei, yet he had treated everything like a big joke, even disdaining his opponents' intelligence. This resulted into him suffering a huge loss.

Things did not look good for Gu Fei after he had been surrounded by layers of people. However, not giving up until the last minute was Gu Fei's way of living as well. Either due to time constraints or Gu Fei being alone, the number of ambushers was not actually that high. Gu Fei found the current situation to be considerably better than when he had been chased by tens of thousands players in Yunduan City.

Gu Fei decided to strike now in order to escape before his opponents' backups arrived. He pulled out Moonlit Nightfalls from his dimensional pocket.

Due to the restriction of Sword Aptitude, Gu Fei could not utilize the full attack power of his sword. Precise calculation was needed to determine just how high his current damage output. But recalling the sensation he had felt whenever his sword attack connected previously, the current damage that he could deal was probably about half of its maximum damage output. That was slightly lower than the damage dealt by Sacred Flames of Baptism with its additional fire attack. However, Gu Fei needed precisely a weapon that could provide consistent damage like Moonlit Nightfalls right now, as he was in a worrying situation that had him on the receiving end of a group attack. Sacred Flames of

Baptism's inconsistent 30% proc rate might really cost Gu Fei his life if he used it at the moment. Furthermore, if the additional fire damage was excluded in the equation, then its attack power was actually far lower than Moonlit Nightfalls.

Gu Fei jumped down the entrance's flight of stairs and pointed Moonlit Nightfalls outward.

He was about to attempt one of the unique moves in Gu Family's Inheritance Arts: Zhao San Mu Si.

Gu Fei really disliked this move's name. While naming a kung fu move after a Chinese idiom was elegant, this particular move was not elegant in the slightest.

In truth, the move was a very ancient sword style. The original meaning of the idiom "Zhao San Mu Si" basically described the very move, which meant "to see through the ruse in order to perceive the truth". And from this, it could be inferred that the move was just a big and flashy trick.

When unleashing the move, the user would have to strike with a sword at his or her numerous opponents swiftly and incessantly. The strikes would be a mixture of feints and real attacks. The feint attacks would be pulled back right before connecting, creating the illusion of an actual attack; meanwhile, the real attacks would be plunged into the targets viciously. A substantial amount of strength would be needed for every pierce made if every attack connected. Considering that the opponents were usually some distance away, it was unrealistic to actually pierce so many of them in an instant. Hence, for this swordplay move, the more feints the user could make, the more opponents he or she could target. Given Gu Fei's prowess in reality, he could jab at twelve targets with only one real target within a specified time.

With the current restrictions from his limited stat points, Gu Fei figured that he could only pierce six times at most using the move. But if he slightly altered his attacks by not thoroughly piercing a

target, he could add two more pierces into the move.

And he did exactly just that. Gu Fei swung Moonlit Nightfalls for eight times and jab at different targets each time, his sword coming alive with every blow. Zhao San Mu Si was a move that could even deceive those who knew real kung fu, so fooling the average players with it was a piece of cake.

In an instant, eight players, who had become Gu Fei's designated targets, assumed that a sword was about to stab them, causing them to reflexively swing the weapons in their hands to parry it. The surrounding players heard that this person had gotten rid of their leader in just three sword swings, so he was definitely not someone that they should underestimate. What they did not know, however, was that their leader had just been unlucky enough to proc the 30% fire attack in all of Gu Fei's three swings.

Gu Fei glanced at those receiving his attacks and felt very satisfied with their reactions. As expected of a city where PvP was all the rage, the fighting standard of the players was high indeed. They were astutely blocking his attacks with their weapons. Had this occurred in Yunduan City, half of the noobish players would have probably done something as stupid as stand still to endure Gu Fei's sword attacks and continue trading blows with him.

The result was gratifying, indeed. Gu Fei had managed to make the eight players retreat with a sword in hand. He matched the combat's flow and stepped into the opening within the crowd, executing the same move once more.

Gu Fei carried out his assault on six targets this time.

The others would eventually see through Gu Fei's trickery if he relied on it too much. He no longer dared to underestimate his opponents' IQ levels, so he hid a real attack among the six sword strikes. As for the target of this attack, it was of course Gu Fei's favorite prey: the Thief.

The HP of Mages was actually lower than Thieves. However, the

ones who would always rush onward to close in on Gu Fei never included Mages. This would leave the Thieves to be the ones with the lowest HP among his melee attackers.

Five feint attacks later, Gu Fei pointed Moonlit Nightfalls at the Thief.

The Thief raised his dagger nimbly to block the sword. Gu Fei revealed a faint smile as he easily changed the angle of the sword; the blade's tip brushed past the dagger's tip and landed on the Thief's forehead.

The Thief screamed at the top of his lungs. Having something stabbed onto one's forehead was a horrible feeling, after all.

Gu Fei unleashed the same move for the third time after turning the blade's tip. Zhao San Mu Si had been unleashed in an anti-clockwise direction just then; it was unleashed in a clockwise direction this time. Gu Fei's very first strike was a legitimate attack, and its target was once again the poor Thief.

The Thief died on the spot after being attacked twice with Moonlit Nightfalls' allowed maximum damage. Gu Fei's PK points would naturally increase by 1 point, but that was something he had expected. Could he cause an impact if all he did was unleash flashy moves that neither harmed nor killed the others? Once these players realized that Gu Fei's swordplay was lacking in power, they would be bold enough to move forward. If the reinforcement arrived at that time, he would be a goner for sure – unless of course he miraculously turned into Superman or Spider-man.

The impact of Gu Fei's fighting prowess had already taken shape. However, he should not become lax in inflicting mental distress on to his opponents either. Taking advantage of the retreating group of players, Gu Fei carved a circle onto the ground with the tip of his sword. The sword motion's resulting gust of wind had lifted the dust off the ground, scattering it in the air in all three hundred and sixty degrees.

“This is MY sword cordon! Anyone who steps inside will only find one outcome... DEATH!” Guess I need to act tough at this crucial moment, Gu Fei thought to himself.

The opposing players were visibly shaken, as they stared at Gu Fei's sword, not even daring to make the slightest movement. They had seen with their eyes how Gu Fei killed their fellow Thief with just two stabs. While Thieves truly have low HP, this man did not even use a skill on our brother! More importantly, what exactly is his job class? The surrounding players were using Appraisal like crazy, but nothing came up.

Gu Fei was not feeling too good either! His opponents had temporarily stopped their movements as they were shaken by his actions. They now formed a circle around him. With how wide the circle was, Gu Fei was unable to kill his way out of it. The opposing players had yet to react properly, but Gu Fei would be done for once they mobilized their Archers and Mages to carry out aerial assaults from a vantage point.

How can I get out of this encirclement?! Gu Fei eyed the various players currently surrounding him. While nobody among them stepped forward to challenge Gu Fei, they did not show a worried look since they had superiority in numbers. They knew that Gu Fei could not slay everyone, yet nobody wanted to be on the offensive recklessly. If it came down to a scuffle, Gu Fei would recklessly struggle to the bitter end. He would probably take down two players with him if he was going down to their concerted attacks. Nobody wished to become one of those 'two', so everyone was hoping for someone to come up with a safer approach.

“Where're the Archer and Mage?!” someone asked loudly.

Upon hearing this, Gu Fei knew that he could not afford to wait anymore. He decided to use his life to bet for his freedom with no other choices left. He swung Moonlit Nightfalls wildly once more after a loud roar. The real attack of Zhao San Mu Si was pointed toward a Warrior this time.

His current move was a little lacking, as he had run out of time to vary his attacks when the targeted Warrior blocked with his claymore. The two swords clashed, and Gu Fei's purlicue went numb. The Warrior was all fired up upon seeing that he had managed to block Gu Fei's attack, so he raised his hand to follow up with a slash.

Gu Fei gritted his teeth and held Moonlit Nightfalls horizontally to block the overhead slash. The impact from blocking the attack had shaken loose the tears in Gu Fei's lacrimal glands. He felt extremely aggrieved when he experienced such Strength difference despite the opposing Warrior possessing a scrawny physique.

Gu Fei was pushed a few steps backward from the clash, yet his hand did not remain idle. He went along with the strike's impetus as he retreated, reflexively moving his hand holding a sword backward. There was a name for this move as well: [Dao Ying Lai](#). It was specifically used to sneak in an attack on the enemy behind.

A player standing behind Gu Fei was of course unable to block such a brilliant move, and Moonlit Nightfalls stabbed right at him. The player got the shock of his life when he saw that only half of his HP remained. Gu Fei turned his body around in accordance. His other hand had unnoticeably become adorned with a Chinese broadsword as well, and he proceeded to perform a downward slash from the head.

The opposing player was so shocked that he was sweating all over. He reached his hand out in the hope of blocking the attack. He actually managed to stop it by grabbing Gu Fei's arm before it fully descended.

Gu Fei quickly retracted Moonlit Nightfalls in his other hand and posed to cut his opponent once more. Having already experienced the sword's attack before, the opposing player knew that one more strike from it would mean his death. Panicking and not putting much thought into the matter, he tossed his arms in the air and yelled, "Go to hell!"

Gu Fei sailed outside with a whoosh, yet he actually felt deeply relieved.

This was what he had been waiting for. Level 30 Fighter skill, Seismic Toss.

Gu Fei had believed that the player was a level 30 Fighter, and that he would reflexively use Seismic Toss when in dire straits to save himself. Gu Fei had finally made a correct judgment this time.

He had been successfully tossed out of the encirclement right now! It was time to run!

Dao Ying Lai (倒影来 in Chinese).

Chapter 75 - Exposed

Gu Fei swiftly climbed up to his feet after being tossed away by the Fighter. Glancing back, he saw that all the Past Deeds' guild members were now charging toward him. Gu Fei did not have time to admire such a spectacle and could only run for his life, as the Archers and Mages' long-range attacks were presently sailing toward him. But while he was wary of Snipe, the rest of the attacks did not even cause him worry, and he easily waded through all of them.

Gu Fei actually ended up benefiting from the accuracy of Snipe. The Archers using Snipe were all aiming at the same spot, so evading one arrow on Snipe meant evading everything altogether.

The onslaught of projectile attacks had rendered even the Past Deeds' melee players incapable of pursuing Gu Fei. In Parallel World, the attacks made by players could deal damage even to their comrades. Therefore, the melee units would only become victims of friendly fire if they persisted on chasing Gu Fei at the moment. Moreover, they thought that chasing him zealously was unnecessary. Since he had already been hit with Seismic Toss before, they assumed that another hit from an arrow or magic spell would render him dead. Hence, none of them expected Gu Fei to actually dodge every projectile attack they had sent his way.

“Does he have an extra pair of eyes on his back?” an Archer asked incredulously, as he watched Gu Fei effortlessly dodge their aerial attacks.

He got away even with all of us swarming him? The sight of Gu Fei's figure getting further and further away made the Past Deeds' guild members doubt their eyes. They could not wrap their minds around the fact that Gu Fei had managed to escape their concerted long-range attacks unscathed. The Past Deeds Guild had always been domineering and tyrannical ever since its establishment in Yueye City. Players could be seen meekly making way for its guild

members whenever they navigated the city's streets. And when they headed out to grind levels, other players would never dare seize the better grinding spots from them for fear of offending their guild. In fact, the Past Deeds' guild members would not even wait for other players to offer their spots to them and would simply snatch the spots blatantly.

It seemed that such a puissant guild had finally met its match this very day. Not only did they fail to prevent their guild leader from being assassinated, they also let the assailant escape under the public's gazes. Although some luck might have factored in on Gu Fei's feats, he had still managed to tarnish their tyrannical reputation. The Past Deeds' guild members would probably feel even worse if they knew that Gu Fei had manipulated the Fighter into tossing him out of their encirclement earlier.

"Did anyone manage to appraise that guy?" Seeing the implausibility of catching up to their target, Blue Ease, the vice guild leader of Past Deeds and the one in charge of the current operation, asked.

Blue Ease was a Mage. He had been feeling invincible when he had sent a fireball toward Gu Fei along with the other long-range assault troops earlier, thinking that their target would easily be blown to shreds. In the end, all he saw was the casted fireball trailing Gu Fei's butt until it died down completely.

"Da*n it! Just how many points does his Agility have?" Blue Ease lashed out silently. Determining how their target had allocated his stat points without knowing his job class was hard. Blue Ease felt secretly grateful that he had not managed to say, "Back off, everyone. I'll handle this!" back then; otherwise, he would be feeling embarrassed right now.

"No. Couldn't appraise him at all," the Appraisal experts said one after another to their vice guild leader.

"How is that possible? Isn't your Appraisal skill at rank 10

already?” The few Appraisal experts glanced over at the top expert among them.

“I really couldn’t appraise him! Maybe, his Appraisal skill is at rank 10 as well, with a higher proficiency than mine...” the top expert defended himself weakly, his voice trailing off.

“Where did that guy come from?” Blue Ease asked.

“He said he’s from The Black Hand mercenary group,” the player who had previously interacted with Gu Fei said. He was that ‘dumb’ player who had crouched at the Quest Assignment Hub’s entrance while fiddling with his sword.

“That idiotic bunch?” Blue Ease felt stunned. He refused to believe that such an amazing player could belong to The Black Hand mercenary group.

“That guy’s stupid,” the ‘dumb’ player said, “He specifically came over to tell me he’s our guild leader’s killer before leaving. If he didn’t say anything, we’d never find out.”

“How audacious! We must eradicate him to avenge our leader!” the guild members exclaimed.

Seeing how the guild members’ emotions were running high, Blue Ease started issuing commands in high spirits. He divided them into teams and assigned each team to various corners in Yueye City.

“Look for any member of The Black Hand mercenary group!” Blue Ease ordered.

“Shouldn’t we leave someone over here?” somebody asked.

“No need! Our target already finished his business here,” Blue Ease rejected, not knowing that he had just issued an order advantageous to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei did not loiter around after he had escaped the ambush. Since it was along the way, he rushed toward the reported location

of the target for the previous 'Bounty Mission' he had accepted. Truly, nothing could stop a person who was in luck. Sacred Flames of Baptism's 30% fire attack had been procced thrice back when he was killing Silver Moon; following that, he managed to extricate himself from the enemy's encirclement by taking advantage of a Fighter's Seismic Toss. Lady luck was definitely on his side today, and the next event only cemented this truth. After he had run across two streets while following the coordinates, Gu Fei spotted someone running in panic toward his general direction. Gu Fei paid the guy no mind, as he saw no serial number on him. But immediately afterward, he saw another person holding a bow and arrow come out of a street corner. The Archer was obviously chasing after that panicky person just now.

Gu Fei was overjoyed. The serial number above the Archer's head was a match with his current target. He did not know whether the Archer was on a killing spree or trying to erase his PK points. If it was the latter, then the target was quite the unlucky guy.

Pretending to be a spectator, Gu Fei moved to the side as the Archer continued his chase. When the Archer was about to pass by Gu Fei, the latter heartlessly stretched a leg out.

The Archer had quite the decent reaction speed, as he timely hopped over to skip past Gu Fei's outstretched leg. Unfortunately for the guy, Gu Fei had a follow-up move even when he was merely trying to trip someone over. He brought his outstretched leg higher and forcefully hindered the Archer's foot.

The Archer did not fall down when he landed his targeted foot, but he staggered all over the place for a bit. Gu Fei apathetically slashed the Archer as soon as he closed in on him.

The Archer's fate was sealed now that Gu Fei had gotten near him. He fumbled with his bow and arrow in confusion, trying to counter the incoming attack. However, Gu Fei did not give him a chance to collect himself and immediately delivered his second sword strike. The Archer tried to dodge it, yet Gu Fei's adaptive

swordplay did not allow him to do so. When the Archer received that slash, he retreated to distance himself from Gu Fei. Sadly, the Archer did not have a full-Agility physique that was on par with Gu Fei's, so he failed to create a gap between them. Gu Fei delivered yet another slash as he closed in on the target once more. With that third slash, the Archer was finally subdued. The sound of a slamming cell door echoed almost at the same time that the Archer faded into a stream of white light.

Gu Fei had to go back once more to the Quest Assignment Hub to claim his reward. He dared not be careless this time and remained vigilant with his every step toward 4th Night Main Street. When he arrived at the entrance, he circled the surroundings for a long while, checking every corner that might contain suspicious-looking individuals. He only entered the hub after confirming that no ambush had been laid for him.

As for inside the hub, Gu Fei saw that many people were coming and going. He believed that escaping an ambush inside would be easy with this huge crowd, so he walked right in straight away.

Just like when he had come here before, Gu Fei's masked appearance attracted the attention of many. Gu Fei did not intend to stay here long, so he hurriedly claimed his reward and accepted a new 'Bounty Mission'.

He aimlessly walked down the street as he waited for the mission's latest coordinates to appear. Suddenly, Gu Fei sensed that something was amiss behind him.

Acting nonchalant, Gu Fei slowly increased his walking pace while he furtively took note of the situation in his surroundings. As he got closer to a junction, he abruptly dashed toward the next street. Making another turn at a bend, he then hid himself behind a wall column.

Gu Fei saw a skinny figure appear on the street not long after. This person looked around with an alluring gaze and entrancing

demeanor. It was a lady.

Gu Fei inspected her attire closely and did not find Past Deeds' emblem. Gu Fei was sure that the Past Deeds' conceited players would be mindful of others not recognizing that they belonged to the guild. Therefore, all of them would surely place emblems on the most conspicuous parts of their bodies. In fact, every guild member he had encountered thus far acted that way.

She's probably not from Past Deeds! If she is, there shouldn't be just her.

With that thought in mind, Gu Fei stepped out from behind the wall. Still, he remained alert and had even placed a hand on the sword on his back.

"Lady, who're you looking for?" Gu Fei asked.

The lady smiled widely as she turned around and saw Gu Fei, "I'm looking for you!"

Skinny. Too skinny. Gu Fei thought of this when he looked at the lady. He had this odd feeling that it would be satisfying to snap her in half.

"Who're you?" Gu Fei inquired.

"Will-low," the lady answered.

"The tree?" Gu Fei clarified, baffled.

"No. Just Will-low."

"Quite a unique name you've got there," Gu Fei commented.

"What about yours?" Will-low asked.

Gu Fei did not answer that, and he replied with a question instead, "Why're you looking for me?"

"To catch you," Will-low replied honestly.

"Catch me?" Gu Fei's grip on his sword became firmer. His mind started simulating seven or eight different ways to eliminate the

lady in one move under such distance.

“You’re Fugitive 27149, right?” Will-low smirked, “Yunduan City’s Close Combat Mage.”

Gu Fei received quite the shock. Although he was crazily wondering inside what had given him away to the lady, he remained calm on the surface, “I don’t know what you’re on about.”

Will-low smirked again, “I’ve accepted a ‘Bounty Mission’ targeting you, so I can see the serial number 27149 hovering above your head.”

Gu Fei felt stunned. The lady did not seem to be lying to him. He dropped the charade and asked straightforwardly, “How did you find that out?”

“In the Bounty Assignment Hall, I saw Fugitive 27149’s PK value drop from 10 to 6 on the Wanted Players list. It means that the fugitive accepted a ‘Bounty Mission’ to kill a player with 4 PK points. I happen to know a guy with 4 PK points in this city, so I became suspicious that you’re in here. To find out if I was right, I accepted the ‘Bounty Mission’ to hunt for you. And then... I waited at the hall to see if you’d come back to claim your mission reward. In the end, you did.”

Gu Fei sighed after hearing her explanation. One’s identity could easily get exposed when he or she had a high PK value.

“I actually wanted to trail after you back then. Unfortunately, you’re surrounded by Past Deeds’ players. I was preparing to look for you at the spawn point, yet you actually managed to get away,” Will-low said.

“I just got lucky,” Gu Fei said.

“I continued observing your PK value after that. If there was a change again, it would mean that you had accomplished another ‘Bounty Mission’. If that’s the case, you’d surely return to claim

your reward. And so, I waited until you appeared again.”

“You’re clever,” Gu Fei smiled wryly, “Now, you’ve managed to catch up to me.”

“Can you do me a favor in exchange for not capturing you?” Will-low winked one of her eyes as she asked this.

“What favor?” Gu Fei asked. She should be aware that her words did not hold much weight to Gu Fei, so she had clearly said that as a joke. He naturally did not think much of her request and only followed up with a question.

“Take off your mask and let me see what you look like,” Will-low requested.

“No,” Gu Fei did not even think of it. It was as if he rejected her out of reflex. Concealing his identity had now become a habit for him.

“Why?” Will-low asked.

“No particular reasons.”

“How can I treat you to a drink if you don’t take your mask off?” Will-low winked again.

“Why do you need to treat me to a drink?” Gu Fei asked.

“Uhm... Since you didn’t agree to my earlier request, I’m changing it to another,” Will-low answered.

Gu Fei remained silent.

“Why did you hunt that fellow called No Smile?” Will-low asked suddenly.

“It’s a request!” Gu Fei explained.

“Can you also accept a request from me to hunt a person?” Will-low requested.

“No,” Gu Fei rejected her once more.

Chapter 76 - Compassion Surging Out

Gu Fei's rejection made Will-low display an aggrieved look on her face and purse her lips, "Why not?"

Gu Fei sighed, "I still haven't cleared off all my PK points! Besides, why should I blithely kill someone for no rhyme or reason?"

"What about that No Smile, then?"

"He's a villain..." Gu Fei suddenly thought that his answer sounded childish, as if he was coaxing a child.

"The person I want you to kill is a villain, too!" Will-low remarked.

"Oh? How villainous?"

"Just follow me!" Will-low urged.

Gu Fei gave it a thought and decided to follow Will-low.

Gu Fei was not familiar with Yueye City. Before long, he completely lost track of the streets and alleyways they had just walked. He saw Will-low halt her footsteps at a certain establishment and knock with a rhythm on its door.

The door opened not long after. A head peeked out from within and looked around in all direction. The person became very nervous when he spotted Gu Fei, "Who's this guy?"

"Someone I recruited," Will-low answered.

"Just one?" The person furrowed his brows.

"Let's get inside first!" Will-low pushed that person aside and dragged Gu Fei in.

The room was smaller than Amethyst Rebirth's guild house, and only five people including Will-low were on it. Gu Fei was at a loss as he stared at Will-low, waiting for an explanation.

“These guys here have offended a certain someone in this city. Now, they can’t even properly enjoy the game. You can only meet these guys right now, since most are offline. Some even declared that they won’t play Parallel World anymore,” Will-low explained solemnly.

“That bad, huh?” Gu Fei asked.

One of them sighed, “I was killed every time I got spotted. Can’t even join any guild or mercenary group now. How can I continue playing when people treat me like I have the plague and avoid me whenever I’m outside? I reached level 30 before, but now? I’m only at level 23! Can’t even go outside and grind. Those few grinding maps are all we have here. If I want to do a quest I still have to accept one at a fixed location, so I can’t avoid the hunt for me no matter what.”

“Move to another city, then! Stop staying in Yueye City,” Gu Fei reasoned.

“Another city...” one of them mumbled, “Where is it?”

“Trek across the Oolong Mountain Range, and then you’ll be in Yunduan City,” Gu Fei said.

The few people’s pairs of eyes sparkled, as they stood up in unison, “Let’s get going now!”

Will-low interfered immediately, “Hey! Did you guys forget that we still have to settle the score?”

“Settle what score?!” one of them asked impatiently, “We should leave right away while we still can! We don’t have anywhere to hide before, but now we have one. So we should leave this city at once!” One of the few players headed toward the door as he said that. Will-low went forward and tried to pull them back.

“Shut it!” one of them swung his arm and shoved Will-low away. They got out of the door and left, not even looking back once. Will-low stood numbly at one place, feeling extremely aggrieved that

tears collected at the side of her eyes.

“Uhh... friends of yours?” Gu Fei asked.

“Maybe!” Will-low wiped the tears before they could fall with her hand.

“Just let them be! Don’t feel too bad! Why don’t you join them and head off to Yunduan City? It’s much more harmonious over there compared to here,” Gu Fei tried to convince her.

“Why’re you here in Yueye City, then?”

“I’m an exception,” Gu Fei felt embarrassed. Although he had already attracted quite a few troubles upon his arrival to Yueye City, he still had a more peaceful time here than in Yunduan City.

“I’m not leaving. I must settle this score,” Will-low said in a firm tone.

“Good luck to you, then!” Gu Fei acknowledged, thinking of leaving as well.

“Please, you’ve got to help me!” Will-low turned her two tearful eyes at Gu Fei as she pleaded, clutching one of his arms.

Gu Fei did not have the kind of soul-stirring resolve to swing his arm away like one of those guys just now. He could only sigh, saying, “It’s not that I don’t want to help, but I’m only here to take refuge. There’s a limit to what I can do, so how can I help you like this?”

“But you even managed to kill Silver Moon,” Will-low’s face was full of expectation.

Gu Fei sighed again, “Who is it that you’re talking about, anyway?”

“Vast Lushness,” Will-low said, “That fellow is vile. All we did was kill-steal monsters, and most were accidental, too. In the end, that vile fellow brought allies along to hunt us repeatedly. That person declared that if any guild or mercenary group dares to take

us under their wings, they'll be annihilated along with us. So we were driven away by everyone like rats all over the city."

"So tyrannical?!" Gu Fei felt bewildered. This was truly an eye-opener.

Will-low continued, "Now, only Thieves like us can still come online and roam the city using Stealth. The others don't even dare to appear online anymore."

"How dreadful," Gu Fei's compassion surged out.

"Can you lend me a helping hand, please?" Will-low's helpless expression had no doubt moved Gu Fei.

Gu Fei nodded his head in the end, "Alright! I'll give it a try. I'm not guaranteeing anything, though! You also need to help me plan this."

Will-low's gloomy demeanor had shifted to one teeming with radiance and grace upon hearing Gu Fei's promise, "Just say it. What do you need?"

"Go to the Auction House and get me some equipment, especially clothes. It must be different from what I'm currently wearing. If you see accessories with fire attack proc rate, get some of those, too," Gu Fei instructed her.

"Ah—but I don't have money on me now!" Will-low was stumped when she heard the kind of help Gu Fei needed.

Gu Fei took out his money pouch, separated 200 gold coins from the rest, and gave them to Will-low, "Now go!"

Will-low accepted the coins, feeling shocked. She looked as if she could not believe that this was happening. She pondered for quite a while, before saying, "You can't stay inside the house once I leave. I'll have to add you as a friend to give you access."

"No need. I'll just wait outside!" Gu Fei headed outside. He did not want to simply reveal his identity like that.

Will-low activated her Stealth and went to the Auction House while tightly holding on to the gold coins. Gu Fei did not loiter around either. He continued hunting for the target of the 'Bounty Mission' that he had accepted previously. Unfortunately, the target was not inside the city. As Gu Fei followed the coordinates, he noticed that he was about to leave the city gate. He was hesitating whether he should continue chasing or not, when he suddenly smacked his forehead. He remembered something crucial.

He did not add Will-low as a friend, so he had no way of contacting her. He quickly retraced his steps while he could still remember the way back. Ultimately, he managed to find the house that Will-low had taken him to earlier. He stepped forward to knock on the door, yet he could see no one when the door finally opened. Will-low canceled Stealth when she saw that it was Gu Fei.

"I thought you had left already!" Will-low vented.

Gu Fei could only smile at that as he stepped inside. Will-low took a bunch of items out of her dimensional pocket and tossed them on the table.

"Flaming Robe: adds 7 points to Intelligence and 10% more to fire damage. It cost 100 gold coins; Fire's Blessing: a necklace that increases proc rate of additional fire attack by 6%. It cost 10 gold coins; and finally, two different Ring of Flames: the one with additional 7% proc rate cost 10 gold coins, while the one with additional 6% proc rate cost 12 gold coins. There's an emblem that adds 7% more to fire damage, but I didn't buy it since it costs 50 gold coins. There're 68 gold coins remaining. Here, take them back," Will-low finished explaining the different items and handed the gold coins back to Gu Fei.

"Hmm... Not bad," Gu Fei said as he inspected the different items in his hands. Actually, he did not know how in-game items were priced. Even if he did know, he could not do anything about it. This was because the way Parallel World's cities were set up was

similar to that of regular MMOs with two different servers: The prices of in-game goods varied from each city or not at all!

Gu Fei swapped his old equipment with the new items. Upon equipping them, Sacred Flames of Baptism's additional fire attack proc rate reached 49%. This was akin to the fire attack activating with every two slashes. As for his new clothes called Flaming Robe, it boosted Intelligence by 7 points and increased the fire damage dealt by its wearer, making the additional fire attack even more fearsome. Weapons' additional magic damage could be boosted by a trait that increased magic damage.

After he changed his clothes, Gu Fei asked Will-low, "So where can we find this Vashy Lushy fellow?"

"Not online yet. But I know Vast Lushness' daily routine! I'll bring you to that vile person later. And then, I'll remain on Stealth on the sidelines and see you in action!" Will-low excitedly said.

"We don't know that for sure yet... I might be the one receiving a beating," Gu Fei said, "There're so many of you, yet you all couldn't do anything to that person... Vast Lushness has a lot of allies, right?"

Will-low nodded her head.

"What's that person's job class, anyway?" Gu Fei asked.

"Priest," Will-low answered.

Gu Fei furrowed his brows, as this was a job class that he had never gone up against before. Among the current seven main job classes in Parallel World, he had zero confrontation with Priests and Knights. After all, these job classes' current skills were mainly used to assist and support other players. Carrying assaults in the frontline and ambushing others were not their fortes.

Because of Gu Fei's tendency to overlook these supporting job classes, he had almost no understanding of them. When Brother Assist analyzed the enemies during their assault on No Smile back

then, Gu Fei recalled hearing from him that Priests who focused on building their Endurance were hard to kill.

“What sort of Priest build does that person have?” Gu Fei asked Will-low, sounding very professional.

“It’s one focusing on Intelligence and Spirit,” Will-low answered.

Although Priests lacked Strength and Agility, they had great Intelligence and Spirit. Spirit, in particular, was the Priests’ strongest stat. There existed two kinds of Priest builds in Parallel World currently: Endurance-based build, which increased their chances of survival; and Intelligence-and Spirit-based build, which improved their healing spells’ bestowing speed. Most Priests would choose the Endurance-based build. As for those who preferred Intelligence-and Spirit-based build, they were usually experts confident of their ability.

Gu Fei was of course oblivious to all this, but he felt assured upon hearing that this particular Priest did not have an Endurance-based build.

While he was reflecting on this matter, Will-low happily shouted, “Ah! Vast Lushness is online!”

Gu Fei smiled faintly, “You’re probably not this happy whenever that fellow is online before.”

Will-low felt slightly embarrassed, but she regained her composure soon after, “Vast Lushness habitually leaves the Priest Academy to head to the nearest tavern. When they form into a gang, they then head out to grind levels together. But things might be a little different today.”

“Why’s that?” Gu Fei asked.

“Because you just slew their guild leader, Silver Moon,” Will-low explained.

“Your target is someone from Past Deeds, too?”

“Of course it’s someone from Past Deeds, considering how tyrannical that fellow is!” Will-low said dejectedly, before suddenly asking, “Did you really slay Silver Moon in a tavern?”

Gu Fei nodded his head.

“Where?” Will-low spread a map out on the table as she asked.

Gu Fei did not know where it was located, but he still remembered its coordinates. He pointed the location out after roughly searching through the map.

“Silver Moon and his gang were here... They’re probably waiting for Vast Lushness to get online before grinding together. If they waited there earlier, Vast Lushness probably got online at...” Will-low’s finger moved on the map, before stopping and tapping on a designated log-off point nearest to the tavern, “This Mage Academy right here.”

Chapter 77 - Stay Far Away from the Lunatic

“Where are we right now?” Gu Fei inspected the map.

“Here,” Will-low pointed their location on the map using her index finger.

“It’s quite far from the Mage Academy. That person will probably leave that place before we get there,” Gu Fei said while calculating the distance between the two locations on the map.

“Mhm... But we do know Vast Lushness’ destination,” Will-low said.

“Where?” Gu Fei asked.

“The underground prison; to visit Silver Moon,” Will-low answered.

“We can even visit a prisoner in-game? Where’s that underground prison located?” Gu Fei asked.

Will-low stared at Gu Fei for five whole seconds. His remark seemed like something a noob would say, so she found it rather hard to associate him with that person who had caused quite a stir in the entire gaming server through his killing.

“Oh, it’s here!” Gu Fei found the underground prison’s location on the map himself, “We can intercept Vast Lushness on the way if we leave now. So let’s go!”

As the two hurriedly left the house, Will-low hedged for a bit before saying, “Umm... I’m sure you’re aware of this, so just take it as a reminder... You currently have PK points; if you enter the underground prison, it’s considered as you surrendering yourself.”

“Oh. I didn’t know that. Thanks for telling me,” Gu Fei said.

Will-low remained silent.

As the two were rushing toward the underground prison’s location, Will-low pointed a spot on the map to Gu Fei, “We can

intercept Vast Lushness over at this point with our speed, unless that person did not choose to travel through this shortcut to the prison.”

Gu Fei nodded his head in acknowledgement. The pair managed to quickly reach the location indicated by Will-low. Gu Fei casually hid into a wall corner while Will-low stayed by the roadside under Stealth mode.

“Point out Vast Lushness to me later,” Gu Fei told Will-low once they had gotten into position.

Two minutes had passed before Will-low ran back toward Gu Fei’s hiding place. “They’re here!” she excitedly announced.

Gu Fei peeked from his hiding place and saw quite a few people heading their way. He recognized some of the faces as belonging to those Past Deeds’ ambushers from before.

“It’s the one walking at the very front,” Will-low said.

“The very front...” Gu Fei scanned the group with his eyes, “... That’s a lady.”

“Yup! That’s her!” Will-low confirmed.

“Our target is a lady?!” Gu Fei reiterated himself, feeling quite dumbfounded.

“Mhm-mhm! She’s the wife of Silver Moon,” Will-low nodded her head.

Gu Fei slowly nodded his head as well, “Alright. We’re leaving!”

“What?!” Will-low exclaimed in shock.

“I didn’t say I’ll take action now. And I’ve seen some of them before; they’re tough to fight,” Gu Fei gave her this reasoning.

“Oh,” Will-low nodded her head once more, “If only she’s alone.”

“You’ll get your chance,” Gu Fei patted Will-low.

Will-low received quite the shock. “You can see me?” She faded

into view as she asked this. A Thief's Stealth would forcefully get canceled if he or she came into any contact with a living being or an extension of a living being.

"Not just me. Everyone can see you now, too," Gu Fei grinned.

"What do you mean?" Will-low stared at Gu Fei in confusion.

"Uhh... I want to see if she's as vindictive as you've described her to be," Gu Fei said mildly, before suddenly pushing Will-low out in the middle of the street.

The Past Deeds' guild members just happened to arrive at the two's location, so they immediately spotted Will-low. Gu Fei heard a shriek travel to his hiding place, "You f*ck*ng b*tch! How dare you still come out?!"

Gu Fei peeked just in time to see the men of Past Deeds stop moving, as the lady leading them gave Will-low a withering stare with her almond-shaped eyes. Vast Lushness indeed looked vindictive the way she chewed Will-low out.

Gu Fei shifted his gaze on Will-low, whom he had tossed out to the wolves. Although she appeared to be at a loss, she still stood tall with no intention of backing down. She quickly countered, "On what grounds should I do as you say and stay away from the game?! Did your family come up with this game?!"

"On the grounds that I'll kill you if I ever see you in-game! Since you can't tell chalk from cheese—"

"Killing them just because they appear before your eyes! You're quite domineering!" someone suddenly interrupted Vast Lushness' speech.

Gu Fei looked toward the direction of where the voice had come from and saw no one. But upon raising his head, he spotted someone crouching on a corner of a rooftop on the opposite side of the street. That someone was currently admiring his fist while he looked down from time to time, projecting an everyone-is-beneath-

me sort of vibe.

Having the courage to reveal one's self in a situation like this showed the person's strength of character. However, Gu Fei could only feel nausea at the sight of the figure, since he knew who the guy was. It was Coward's Savior, the one he had branded on his heart as the most idiotic existence in-game – and quite possibly in reality as well.

“Who are you?!” a player of Past Deeds yelled as he pointed up the rooftop.

“The one and only Coward's Savior! You lot of Past Deeds have been rubbing me the wrong way for a long time now! Come and kill me if you can!” Coward's Savior said while thumping his chest as if he was King Kong.

A few Past Deeds' guild members rushed forward at his provocation, trying to climb up the rooftop. Coward's Savior took two steps backward as he continued hooting, “Come and get me! Come and get me!”

The idiot's unneeded intervention infuriated Gu Fei as it disrupted his plan. He had yet to determine whether Vast Lushness was truly an unreasonable person or not. Gu Fei wanted to observe for a while first before taking action, but now that plan would not work anymore thanks to Coward's Savior's interference.

“Ignore that guy,” Those who had been trying to climb up stopped once they heard Vast Lushness' command, “Deal with him later. We'll deal with this brat over here first. Don't let her escape by activating Stealth.”

The guild members all headed back toward Will-low. Coward's Savior was stomping his foot on the rooftop while saying, “You bunch of as*holes! Come and get me instead!”

Vast Lushness smiled frostily, “Alright you scum, listen well. From this moment onward, Yueye City no longer welcomes you.

Scram as far as you can! If you wish to die that much, then just continue wandering around the city every day! Like what I've said to this b*tch before, I'll kill you if I see you again!"

"She's truly vindictive!" It was Gu Fei who had spoken this time. He stepped out of the wall corner while clapping his hands.

Everyone was stunned.

"Who are you?!" The words spoken to Coward's Savior were repeated once more.

"Master!" Coward's Savior hollered.

"Who's your master?!" Gu Fei was enraged.

"Don't think you can fool me by changing your clothes, Master. Your outstanding disposition and distinctive gesture can't be masked by any clothes you wear! That melancholic gaze of yours is especially profound! You...."

Before Coward's Savior could even finish his words, everyone already felt like vomiting. Gu Fei flushed with embarrassment. Luckily, his face was concealed so it was not too obvious. He took two steps forward, arriving beside Will-low, "You can leave first."

"You believe me now?" Will-low asked.

Gu Fei nodded his head.

"Please!" Will-low unexpectedly bowed to Gu Fei.

"That's not necessary, right?" Gu Fei felt bewildered. Before he could speak further, Coward's Savior, who had gotten agitated on the rooftop on other side of the road, stopped his nonsensical adulations and jumped down, "What's with you?! I'm the one who came across Master first! If we're bowing, then I should precede you," after saying this, he bowed to Gu Fei as well. He punctuated his words with, "Master, please!"

This lunatic! Gu Fei roared inside his head.

"Oh, come on! Don't look at us like that, Master. We're in the

twenty-first century already. Must we kneel down and do a real prostration?" Coward's Savior was grinning cheekily.

"I don't know this guy. For real," Gu Fei said sincerely to the surrounding people.

The members of Past Deeds had long turned livid, especially Vast Lushness. She pointed at the trio and yelled, "Kill! Kill them all!"

"One really can't judge a book by its cover! She's pretty on the outside but beyond ugly on the inside!" Gu Fei took out his Chinese broadsword while saying this.

Will-low staggered a bit as she said, "Didn't you say that they're difficult to deal with as a group?"

"I fibbed," Gu Fei smiled sheepishly.

"Master! Head Disciple here will cover for you! Junior Sister, follow my lead!" Coward's Savior said seriously, as he stepped forward and stood abreast with Gu Fei.

"I should keep myself far away from this lunatic," Gu Fei swiftly took two steps to the side.

The opponents with melee job classes continued to charge onward.

"Mantis Fist Style!" Coward's Savior roared as he prepared to advance ahead, but a kick from Gu Fei had sent him rolling two meters away instead, "Say Mantis Fist Style one more time, and I'll hit you till you're dead!"

"Understood!" Coward's Savior nodded his head in acquiescence and bowed. Turning his body around, he hollered, "Seven Stars Mantis Fist Style!"

Gu Fei felt like weeping but no tears came out; instead, extreme vexation rolled off of him in waves. At the same moment that they were conversing, a Thief crept toward them using Stealth. As soon as the Thief emitting killing intent arrived beside the trio, Gu Fei

swung his Chinese broadsword and struck him down. He then stomped on him twice while yelling, “Mantis Fist Style! Mantis Fist Style!”

The Thief cried out, “I didn’t say those words!”

Vast Lushness who was about to bestow Heal on the Thief pulled her magic staff back upon hearing his exclamation. With a frosty expression, she said, “Pathetic. You deserve death.”

Coward’s Savior was still a force to be reckoned with, despite being badly beaten by Gu Fei before. He started his assault with level 0 skill Heavy Punch, carried onward with level 12 skill Uppercut Punch, and ended with level 30 skill Seismic Toss, skillfully tossing the heavy armor Warrior away. Nonetheless, the Warrior job class was not just for show. The term ‘insta-kill’ was totally inapplicable to Warriors in Parallel World. A single Seismic Toss from a Fighter could leave Gu Fei in a half-dead state; in contrast, the Warrior had received the three consecutive attacks and got up like it was nothing. Vast Lushness bestowed Heal on that Warrior in a jiffy, rendering Coward’s Savior’s combo attack useless.

Gu Fei kicked away the Thief under his feet and dashed toward Vast Lushness. Since he considered the others as walking PK points instead of targets, the best-case scenario for him was to avoid fighting all of them.

However, his opponents were part of a well-trained group versed in protecting the Priest, especially one like Vast Lushness who lacked the capability to survive on her own. Just as Gu Fei revealed his intention to get close to Vast Lushness, the other guild members gathered together with Vast Lushness in the center. Even those who had been fighting Coward’s Savior abandoned him and made their way back to her side. Vast Lushness, for her part, did not appreciate their good intention, “What’s there to be afraid of? There’re so many of us! Charge!”

And with that, she commanded the others to charge onward once more.

Gu Fei had been fighting the current battle with a handicap, as he was mindful of adding points to his current PK value. The setting of 'PK value' in the game bummed him out to the point of vomiting blood.

He was forced to go easy on them, even though Vast Lushness the Priest had exceptional healing skills. Her timely Heal just boosted the guild members' morale as the battle dragged on. They were all smiling in a carefree way as if the fight was just a leisure activity.

Gu Fei boiled inside. He shifted his gaze on to Coward's Savior who was near him. Coward's Savior's attacks had looked impressive at the start. Right now, however, he was running all over the battlefield like a dog as he was chased around by a few Past Deeds' guild members. He was barely holding up, and a slight misstep on his part could cost him his poor life.

Gu Fei's chest heaved and he roared, "Da*n it! I'm not going easy on you lot, anymore!"

He immediately targeted the opponent closest to him and unleashed Nine Blades of Tang, slashing the target multiple times.

Gu Fei had previously restricted himself from cutting the same opponent twice. At this point in time, however, he no longer cared about all that and slashed with wild abandon at the opponents to prevent them from retaliating.

Sacred Flames of Baptism's Physical Attack was not actually impressive; what was truly terrifying was its additional fire attack. Now that its proc rate had been raised to nearly 50%, the flames it released burned even more fiercely. The effect of equipping Flaming Robe was visible as well, as it boosted the additional magic damage of the fire attack to a whole new level. Vast Lushness could not keep up with the sudden change of tempo in Gu Fei's attacks, preventing her from healing a guild member in time. This resulted

into that guild member turning into a stream of white light under the scorching flames of Gu Fei's Chinese broadsword.

“PK value, I'm back!” Gu Fei cried out.

Chapter 78 - Entrapment

Unleashing his sword technique in a group fight using Moonlit Nightfalls was easier, yet Gu Fei did not switch weapons. This was because he had already determined the current fight's nucleus: The opposing side had the Priest Vast Lushness to provide timely Heal from the back. This was something that Gu Fei never experienced in the large-scale battles he had participated before.

The scenes in all of Gu Fei's battles thus far had revolved around subduing the enemies in one go, robbing Priests of a chance to react, or having several enemies conceitedly ganged up on him without the assistance of Priests. However, this time around, Gu Fei finally encountered a team with a Priest as its core. Vast Lushness would issue battle commands, while she simultaneously bestowed Heal on her teammates.

Under such a circumstance, Gu Fei's 49% fire attack proc rate would serve as a disruption to his fighting tempo as well as Vast Lushness' tempo. Whoever between them could persist without committing mistakes under such interruption would emerge victorious in the end. While it appeared as if the duel was between Gu Fei and the players encircling him, this fight was in fact between Gu Fei and Vast Lushness who was standing behind her guild members.

“Don't let him strike twice with his Chinese broadsword! Keep up your attacks with one another!” Vast Lushness instructed loudly, reminding everyone of their positions.

Gu Fei could no longer focus his attacks on one person and spend most of his time dodging and fending off the enemies' bombardment instead. On several instances, he almost got hit with Backstab by Thieves who had managed to sneak behind him. Although Gu Fei was able to slip a slash in between the opponents' incoming attacks, his one sword strike, even if the additional fire attack got procced, was unable to insta-kill a player. Moreover,

Vast Lushness steadily followed up Gu Fei's attack with Heal on the side, rendering his sword strike useless.

Under Vast Lushness' timely directives and fine-tuning, the battle had actually returned to its initial state.

The opposing enemies once again revealed carefree smiles. Someone among them even taunted, "Didn't you say you'll stop going easy on us? Why aren't you killing any of us yet?"

All laughed in response to this, as they continued to swing their weapons in hands toward Gu Fei.

Gu Fei smiled lightly, seemingly not the least bit perturbed by their taunting, and appeared to be free of worries. He waded deeper into the enemy encirclement and swiftly struck a blow with his Chinese broadsword.

"Everyone, fall back! Double Tiger, use your Cyclone!" Vast Lushness commanded.

The rest retreated a few steps back, while a Warrior walked ferociously forward, unleashing a Cyclone with a roar.

There was a catchphrase in Saint Seiya: "The same attack never works twice."

That catchphrase could be applied to a kung fu master like Gu Fei as well, especially since the in-game skills were somewhat rigid. Take Cyclone for example, a player must spin his or her body around to unleash it; meaning, the skill would always lack the flexibility to be unleashed with the element of surprise on others.

Just as his opponent was activating the skill, Gu Fei already slipped his Chinese Broadsword inside the Cyclone attack. And with a loud clank, he was flung away to the other side by the attack's force.

The way he was hurled outward by Cyclone right now was unlike how he had been thrown outward by Seismic Toss before. Whereas Seismic Toss' force had a sort of paralyzing effect that had caused

Gu Fei's body to stiffen during the toss, Cyclone's force had a sort of repelling effect that Gu Fei had taken advantage of, allowing him to retain his body control while being flung outward. Regaining his balance mid-air, he alighted steadily on the ground and viciously sent a slash with his sword to the opponent closest to him. Meanwhile, the Warrior called Double Tiger was still spinning on the same spot!

All the enemies gaped at what they had just witnessed. Just who's this guy? He even managed to block Cyclone!

Everyone had assumed that brute strength was needed to block Cyclone, yet they just saw Gu Fei relying purely on technique.

"Master, you rock!" the Fighter Coward's Savior yelled, as he continued to run around like a dog.

Those of Past Deeds had long figured out that only Gu Fei was a threat among their opponents, so they mostly ignored that Fighter. Gu Fei was not running around the battlefield like that Fighter and was confronting them directly, yet they were still helpless on dealing with him.

"What're you lot gawking for?! Hurry up and surround him! Just make sure to leave an opening behind! Get ready, Archers and Mages!" Vast Lushness frantically healed those who had been cut by Gu Fei, as she continued to issue commands to them.

No one imagined that dealing with just one player would require the cooperation of the close-range and long-range job classes; thus, the Mages and Archers of Past Deeds had not joined in on this ongoing battle until now. With that last order, the Mages assumed their casting poses and the Archers adopted their shooting stances. They were prepared to attack any second now. But how could Gu Fei not anticipate this already? He nimbly flittered between his opponents, preventing the Mages and Archers from taking a good aim at him. Players had no immunity against friendly fire in Parallel World. Hence, the Mages and Archers dared not launch

aerial attacks arbitrarily for fear of ‘hitting’ their allies instead.

The current fight was still in a stalemate.

“Mages and Archers, find a way to get atop the rooftop!” Vast Lushness yelled.

With a carefree smile on his face, Gu Fei continued to evade, block, and attack whenever he got a chance.

Vast Lushness was starting to get confused. If this carried on, Gu Fei would evidently be at a disadvantage. And yet, he was dragging the fight on. Vast Lushness felt as if she was forgetting something important. The more she thought about it, the more restless she got. She hurriedly ordered those chasing after Coward’s Savior to stop wasting their time on him and focus on encircling Gu Fei instead.

I think it’s the right choice to call for backup from the start, considering how hard it is to deal with this guy. Just who is he? Vast Lushness thought to herself. She then appraised Gu Fei when an opening presented itself.

Her Appraisal failed, so his equipment, level, and job class continued to remain unknown.

Vast Lushness became even more anxious. She urged the Mages and Archers to hurry up.

Right at this moment, an odd development occurred on the battlefield. A Thief let out a pain-filled cry and collapsed under Gu Fei’s Chinese broadsword. But before he faded away, the Thief threw a weird look her way.

Vast Lushness was stunned. When she saw Gu Fei slash someone again, she posed to bestow Heal on that teammate. It was then that she realized a vital issue: Her mana was all used up.

There was no elixir in Parallel World – or at least, no player had stumbled upon one yet.

Whenever players wanted to replenish their HP or mana during grinding, they would temporarily retreat to a side and remain in an idle state until regeneration kicked in; another way to recover their HP and mana was to consume food or fruit. Although regeneration would be available for players during a fight, it would only be minimal.

As for the 'idle state', players would not be considered entering this condition by simply standing still. An example was Vast Lushness; although she had been standing still all this while as she bestowed Heal on her teammates, the system did not consider her to be in an 'idle state'.

To enter an idle state, players would have to stop attacking, moving, or utilizing their skills for thirty seconds.

Vast Lushness had a sudden realization once more: Ever since she started assisting by the side, she had not entered an idle state even once. This guy... Despite knowing that he was placing himself in dire straits, he still chose to continue with his attacks. This choice was not made out of his desperation to defeat his opponents but to prevent her from being inactive for thirty seconds instead, which would allow her to enter an idle state....

His every move was actually done with a purpose; it was to lure her into a trap.

By the time Vast Lushness returned to her senses, feeling shocked and sweating all over, a pain-filled cry had echoed once more on the battlefield. Gu Fei slew another one of her teammates.

The Past Deeds' guild members turned their heads back, looking strangely at Vast Lushness.

"Lushness! What're you doing?" somebody asked.

"She's out of mana," Gu Fei explained to everyone with a smile on his face.

He really did plan all this! Vast Lushness felt a slight dizziness

overcome her, as she noted her inability to help her guild members who were currently being tormented by Gu Fei. Although she would soon enter an idle state and be able to bestow a Heal after her mana was restored enough, that Heal would be akin to a drop in the bucket. But if she waited until her mana was fully restored, many of her people would surely be dead by then.

But still... Even without my help, there're still so many of my guild mates here. How will he dominate us all?

...It's not the time to be thinking about that; I must hurry and restore my mana! Vast Lushness quickly pulled an apple out of her dimensional pocket. As was stated previously, eating fruit in Parallel World while in an idle state could speed up mana recovery. In fact, the effects of it would be visible after just a few bites. Vast Lushness quickly munched on the apple in her hand. Seeing her do that, Gu Fei smiled faintly and said, "Don't you think it's a bit late to start eating now?"

Vast Lushness could not comprehend his words' meaning, so she just continued munching on the apple.

"Look behind you," Gu Fei said.

Vast Lushness fearfully recalled something at that moment.

Will-low! That woman suddenly disappeared at some point after the fighting had begun.

Right now, Vast Lushness remembered that Will-low was a Thief. Thieves knew Stealth and could perform Backstab....

Vast Lushness had yet to turn around, but she could already feel a piercing coldness spreading on her back.

Will-low's figure slowly materialized behind Vast Lushness. The others of Past Deeds screamed in horror, abandoning Gu Fei to come to Vast Lushness' aid. However, it was all too late.

An Intelligence-and Spirit-based Priest lacked HP. In addition, the defense provided by a priest robe was similar to that of a mage

robe – virtually non-existent. What made it even worse was that Vast Lushness had run out of mana; hence, she could not bestow Heal on herself. With her slow speed, she failed to dodge Will-low's attack. She tried to flee after being struck with Backstab, yet Will-low immediately caught up to her and delivered three more stabs. Vast Lushness finally collapsed unwillingly onto the ground. She paid no attention to Will-low while she was dying, and instead she glared hatefully at Gu Fei.

“Ha ha ha! I finally killed you!” Will-low cheered, although she also very quickly died under the concerted attacks of the Past Deeds' remaining members.

Will-low who had just killed Vast Lushness would of course have 1 PK point on her. Now that she was killed, she would suffer the PvP penalty of dropping by two levels. Even so, the smile on her face did not dim the slightest bit. Before she faded away, she yelled toward Gu Fei, “Thank you so much!”

Gu Fei waved at her in an act of sending her off.

Just before the fighting started and at that moment when Coward's Savior was showing off to everyone on a rooftop....

Will-low asked Gu Fei softly, “Will I get the chance to kill her myself?”

“You will. But you'll most likely end up dead yourself.”

“Perishing together? Fine by me!”

Gu Fei remained silent.

“When will that opportunity come?”

“When she's out of mana.”

In the end, Will-low got her chance. She sacrificed two levels in exchange for taking Vast Lushness' life – a worthy trade in her opinion. As for Gu Fei, he just earned himself 3 PK points. His chest was heaving right now, as he said to himself: PK value? To

hell with that!

Seeing how the others were glaring at him with hate-filled eyes after they had killed Will-low, Gu Fei immediately took off Flaming Robe and put on Midnight Spirit Robe. He returned Sacred Flames of Baptism into his dimensional pocket and pulled out Moonlit Nightfalls next.

“F*ck, it’s him! He’s our guild leader’s killer!” someone who had participated in the previous skirmish with Gu Fei recognized his black robe and purple sword.

“That’s right! It’s me!” Gu Fei hollered. With a quick flourish of his sword, dust plumed off the ground and scattered all over, “Come on! You all want to kill me, right? Try stepping into my sword cordon, then!” Gu Fei had fallen in love with that phrase.

Nobody made a move. Suddenly, a few shadowy figures appeared on a rooftop; one of them secretly took aim at Gu Fei below.

Gu Fei turned around ferociously, with his sword already pointing at that particular someone on the rooftop.

“Fireball! Shoot!” Gu Fei yelled.

A ball of fire formed onto the tip of his blade and flew off toward the Archer nocking an arrow on the rooftop.

“So he’s a Mage. But it’s just a mere fireball...” The Archer smirked coldly, not bothering to dodge the spell, and began to draw his bow. Take a load of my Snipe... the Archer thought to himself.

He did not get a chance to fire that arrow on Snipe, though. Following the fireball’s explosion on him, he was directly sent back to the spawn point for Archers.

Chapter 79 - The Consequences of Being Impulsive

The Past Deeds' guild members were at a loss. Those standing on the rooftop even lowered their heads and started searching the ground for their fellow Archer, assuming that he had just fallen down.

However, they all lost it in the next instant, as they finally accepted the reality that the Archer had truly been insta-killed.

Being insta-killed by the Fireball spell... This was unheard of ever since Parallel World's first day of open beta.

The Mages most basic spell, Fireball, had the fastest casting time, consumed the least mana, and could trace the opponent's movement; however, it was the weakest offensive spell available to Mages as well.

Just how high was this Mage's Magic Attack Power for him to insta-kill someone with just Fireball? Since most of the players were currently at level 30, all were already very aware of how much Magic Attack Power one could attain with the proper allocation of stat points. Therefore, they could only attribute Gu Fei's monstrous damage output to his current equipment.

And yet, Gu Fei was clearly holding a sword! How could there be a boost for Magic Attack Power by equipping a melee weapon such as a sword?

Those present could not wrap their heads around what they had just witnessed.

Actually, the situation was not that unfathomable. Gu Fei's current pieces of equipment were not abnormal by any means and were just high grades – gold-tier and purple-tier to be exact. This was similar to comparing the firepower possessed by a AK47 holder versus a machete or spear wielder; the stark contrast

between the two was glaring.

While Gu Fei did not fully meet Moonlit Nightfalls' Sword Aptitude requirement that prevented him from unleashing its maximum physical damage, he was able to meet its Spell Aptitude requirement, despite never adding points to Intelligence.

Gu Fei was not aware of this at all. Frankly speaking, he could only meet the sword's Spell Aptitude requirement through his Mage job class' innate bonus for Spell Aptitude and his Midnight Spirit Robe's 'Spell Mastery +1' trait.

One fireball was all it took to blow his opponent to death... Even Gu Fei was shocked by this.

Da*n it! The power of spells is truly great. In contrast, the damage caused by my kung fu is just too weak! Gu Fei felt aggrieved, thinking of how his kung fu was being unfairly treated.

He pointed his sword toward the sky in the next moment....

A Mage on the rooftop reacted very quickly at this sight, yelling, "Oh, sh*t! It's Descending Wheel of Flames! Everybody, run!"

The few fellows on the rooftop immediately fled in panic.

Gu Fei was astounded, What the....

Descending Wheel of Flames was a level 24 Mage spell. It was an [AOE](#) spell that Mages could summon to make flaming wheels descend from the sky, which would then scorch the earth by spinning around a battlefield. This particular spell would deal damage to a large number of targets and was currently the main offensive spell of Mages when they were grinding.

And yet, Gu Fei was utterly confused. Having not heard of the Descending Wheel of Flames spell before, he naturally had yet to learn it!

Gu Fei's repertoire of spells only consisted of three: Level 0 Fireball, level 6 Ring of Fire, and level 30 Repeating Fireball.

As for the level 12, level 18, and level 24 spells... Gu Fei did not even know of their existence, so how could he cast them?

Those on the rooftop continued to flee in terror. If Gu Fei had instead casted Descending Wheel of Flames on them back then, they would have surely died. They had previously been squeezing onto a corner of the rooftop to ambush Gu Fei who was down below; that sight of them crowding together was simply too perfect for unleashing Descending Wheel of Flames. He's probably wary of raising his PK value, so he sent a fireball as a warning first!

The players of Past Deeds felt that Gu Fei was being merciful to them. They had accumulated a large amount of experience points and were about to reach level 31. Obviously, none of them would want to die at this point in time.

Gu Fei dully withdrew his sword, turning his head around to glare threateningly at the other Past Deeds' guild members on the street.

For the Past Deeds' guild members, Gu Fei's sword was akin to an illusory existence that was about to swallow them up.

"Let's get out of here!" someone shouted, causing everyone to flee in every direction.

The faster Thieves activated Fleetfoot, and the slower Thieves activated Stealth. Meanwhile, the slowest among the Warriors cried out, "Wait for me!" He then wiped away the tears on his face and chased frantically after the disappearing figures of his fellow guild members.

"Why's everybody running away?" Gu Fei was utterly disappointed, as he had just finished mentally preparing himself to rack up more PK points. How spiteful... Don't they know that ignoring the feelings of others is a shameless thing to do?

"Master!" Coward's Savior, who had run like a dog until his body ached all over, approached Gu Fei.

“Stop saying that nonsense!” Gu Fei was currently in a foul mood. Though, it was not so foul that he would take it out on Coward’s Savior.

“Are you alright?” Gu Fei asked.

“Yes!”

“Let’s go!” Gu Fei made a beckoning gesture toward Coward’s Savior.

“Where to?” Coward’s Savior asked, as he followed closely behind Gu Fei.

“Clearing off PK value,” Gu Fei’s expression was mournful.

After a hot-headed decision, there would naturally be a consequence. For Gu Fei, it was the increase of his PK value. What made him even more depressed was how his newly bought equipment for concealing his identity had been exposed as well.

Since the ‘Bounty Mission’ Gu Fei had previously accepted was not gone yet, he headed straight toward the target’s location after checking the coordinates. His current PK value was at 11 points once more.

Meanwhile, a lot of Past Deeds’ guild members had gathered in Yueye City’s Bounty Assignment Hall.

Blue Ease, the Past Deeds’ second-in-command, asked, “Are you guys sure that he’s our guild leader’s killer?”

Several people quickly nodded their heads, with one saying “I recognized his equipment.”

“And he’s a Mage?” Blue Ease felt very surprised by that fact.

Vast Lushness, who was by his side, felt that it was inconceivable as well. She did not find out the job class of that person while they were fighting previously because he had never unleashed any skills or spells; her attempt to use Appraisal on him ended in failure as well. Only when Vast Lushness had heard the reports of the fleeing

guild members about that person unleashing Fireball did she learn that the guy was a Mage.

Blue Ease went through the 'Bounty Mission' targeting Yueye City's players and said perplexedly, "No one with 4 PK points or higher is on the list... He really killed four of you guys?"

"There're four including me..." an Archer said, feeling ashamed of himself. He was the one killed by Gu Fei with the Fireball spell. If he had attempted to dodge back then, he would not have died. Unfortunately, he was too confident of himself.

"It seems he's not a local player," Vast Lushness said assuredly.

Her words made everyone think of something absurd. With a slight shudder, Blue Ease asked, "Is there a chance of him being that Close Combat Mage of Yunduan City?"

Everyone entered the venue where the Wanted Players list was located and saw that serial number 27149 was still listed on top of it with 11 PK points written in bright red color. He was the sole fugitive with a two-digit PK value in the entire gaming server.

At present, the hype on the forums was no longer about the Close Combat Mage's weird stat point distribution, equipment with additional fire attack, or fighting prowess; instead, it was about the Close Combat Mage's fearless attitude.

In the entire game, no matter how keen a person was toward PvP, he or she would still maintain below 10 or even 5 PK points. A high PK value would easily attract the bounty hunters and would take a long time to clear. Not everyone could handle the pressure of knowing that they would drop by two levels or more upon dying.

Therefore, Fugitive 27149's 15 PK points had become a sort of legend among the players, as it was a record that nobody would dare challenge.

"What do we do now?" Blue Ease asked Vast Lushness. She was neither a high official nor a core member of Past Deeds. Still, her

status as the guild leader's wife made everyone hold her in high esteem. She belonged to a category of people that held authority despite not having an official title. In addition, Vast Lushness was a real expert. Possessing skills and looks, she would of course be considered a gem in the online gaming world. Thus, she was a popular figure in Past Deeds.

“Do you even have to ask? We'll take the ‘Bounty Mission’, of course!” Vast Lushness said, adding, “Call everyone currently online over.”

Since Yueye was an in-game city where PvP was the norm, the guilds were naturally more united compared to those in a normal in-game city like Yunduan. While players relied on themselves for grinding, they depended on their friends for PvP fights. How could one come across dependable friends? By joining a guild, of course!

In fact, those who had joined Past Deeds enjoyed the benefit of being protected by their guild's reputation in Yueye City. With such obvious benefits, the orders of the guild's top brasses would naturally hold a lot of weight to the members. Hence, Blue Ease and Vast Lushness only summoned the members once, and all those who were online had grudgingly or willingly flocked toward the Bounty Assignment Hall.

“Accept the ‘Bounty Mission’ for Fugitive 27149. Find him, but avoid alerting him. Track his movements carefully once you see him,” Vast Lushness commanded concisely on the private guild channel.

The members of Past Deeds obediently queued to accept the ‘Bounty Mission’. The other surrounding players felt terrified upon witnessing such a sight, Just what is Past Deeds up to this time? Which guild are they after now?

“The coordinates refreshed!” a bunch of Past Deeds' players that had just accepted the mission suddenly yelled.

“Those who have his coordinates can proceed ahead,” Vast

Lushness dismissively waved her hand.

Those of Past Deeds, who had no ongoing ‘Bounty Mission’, accepted the mission for Fugitive 27149 and quickly set off toward the coordinates shown.

Vast Lushness looked around her and suddenly said loudly, “Everyone, Fugitive 27149 worth 11 PK points on the Wanted Players list is currently in this city! Hurry up and accept the mission!”

An uproar immediately occurred over at the Bounty Assignment Hall, with many players asking, “Really?”

Vast Lushness nodded her head firmly. And yet, the current uproar was nothing compared to that one in Yunduan City back then.

After all, those who had not witnessed Gu Fei’s hunt of No Smile would be less curious of him. By simply analyzing the issue from a mission’s point of view, the reward for a ‘Bounty Mission’ with 11 PK points must be very grand. However, a majority of the players still had to consider whether the benefit outweighed the risk. Just who was it that they were planning to go up against? Judging from the PK value alone, it would be discourteous to label the Close Combat Mage as a one-in-ten-thousand rare talent. With the current amount of players playing Parallel World, he was definitely a one-in-a-million expert.

Moreover, Yueye City’s Bounty Assignment Hall was usually crowded because a lot of players needed to clear off their own PK points. Players whose sole purpose was to clear off their PK points, especially those with just 1 or 2, would never dare touch such a difficult obstacle. Why challenged a fiend with 11 PK points just to clear off a few PK points? Failing to kill him would mean getting killed themselves and dropping two levels as a corollary.

In the end, the players that had accepted the ‘Bounty Mission’ were either yearning for the huge hunting reward or brimming

with curiosity over the Close Combat Mage's identity.

“Seems like not many people took the mission!” Blue Ease remarked to Vast Lushness as he watched the scene unfolding in front.

Vast Lushness simply smiled, “It's better this way. I was initially worried that that guy won't be able to handle many people hunting him.”

“What do you mean?” Blue Ease asked, puzzled.

“Well, I'm merely hoping that he would accumulate more PK points... That way, it would be much more satisfying when we slay him!” Vast Lushness answered with conviction.

Blue Ease could only gape at her words, This woman is far too sinister.

AOE stands for Area of Effect. It's a term used to describe abilities that deal damage to all enemies in a certain area.

Chapter 80 - A Friend of No Smile

Gu Fei, who had just taken care of the target for his 'Bounty Mission', felt very sad at the moment. He had slain so many people in the previous skirmish that even his identity as a Mage got exposed. With how the rules worked for 'Bounty Mission', those players of Past Deeds – provided that they were not stupid – would have surely uncovered the fact that he was Fugitive 27149 on the Wanted Players list by now.

With this, concealing his face or changing his attire was no longer meaningful. Gu Fei could already imagine how hordes of players would be arriving soon, chasing after his coordinates. The only choice left for him was to run away indefinitely until he cleared off his PK points in another twenty hours or so.

Can I flee and accept more 'Bounty Mission' to clear off my PK value at the same time?

The idea was just too unrealistic. Gu Fei reckoned that a trap must have already been laid in place for him over at the Bounty Assignment Hall. While he might not be thrown into prison, he would surely be assaulted by others if he went there again. Hence, Gu Fei dared not head back to report and claim his reward for his completed 'Bounty Mission'.

I won't even get the chance to surrender this time! Gu Fei sighed.

Should I move to another city again? When this idea surfaced in Gu Fei's mind, he immediately checked his friends list for Fleeting Smile and saw that the latter was offline. Gu Fei did not consider Fleeting Smile as the King of Information but as the King of Leaking Information instead. Without him leaking more information, the Oolong Mountain Range leading back to Yunduan City was the only path Gu Fei presently knew.

If he went back to Yunduan City, his status of being hunted would still not change.

Gu Fei could only let out a long sigh while facing the sky. Where else can I find a home in this vast world?! He seemed to have gone off the deep end by playing Parallel World.

As Gu Fei was lamenting his situation, a few players appeared in his line of sight. They continuously looked all around them as they moved swiftly onward.

Here comes the bounty hunters! Gu Fei thought to himself. Although he was running nonstop, he was not proceeding in a straight line. If he were, the others would never catch up to him. Since he was running around in circles, he was bound to unluckily stumble upon others like right now. Accurately measuring the coordinates of different locations and coming up with a perfect escape route took time, and Gu Fei possessed neither the energy nor the drive to do that right now. Anyway, he doubted whether he could come up with a viable escape route even if he tried to do so, given that he was not familiar with the places around Yueye City.

“Master, you go on ahead! I’ll block them for you!” Coward’s Savior had been maintaining a five-meter distance from Gu Fei along the way. Since Gu Fei was not speaking to him, Coward’s Savior naturally remained silent as well, just keeping abreast with Gu Fei all this while. Now that Gu Fei was about to face a tight situation, Coward’s Savior immediately bounced into action.

He is attentive to my current situation and noticed that those people don’t mean well... Seems like he’s not a lost cause, after all! Gu Fei smiled lightly. Seeing that those players were getting nearer, he gripped the sword in his hand more firmly.

There were four of them. Judging by the weapons they held, they were probably two Thieves and two Archers.

The four saw that Gu Fei and his companion had no intention of running away, so they slowed down and approached the pair at a normal pace.

Gu Fei took the initiative to start a conversation with the four, smilingly saying, “If you’re thinking of profiting from my PK value, be prepared to face the consequences!”

The four quickly raised their hands in unison. “You’ve got the wrong idea about us,” the person in the front said, adding, “We admire you very much and wish to be friends with you.”

After saying that, the four returned their weapons inside their dimensional pockets and raised their hands once more to show that they truly meant Gu Fei no harm.

Gu Fei eyed the four suspiciously as he continued running at the same fast pace he was going at.

“Let’s talk while we keep moving! It’s not a good idea to loiter in one place.” The other party understood what Gu Fei was going through right now.

Gu Fei remained silent. The four walked parallel to him while maintaining a fair distance. They seemed to be trying to eliminate Gu Fei’s doubts on them.

“Why’re you all looking for me?” Gu Fei asked while walking briskly.

“Brother, what you did in the city today... It’s the most gratifying thing!” one of them answered.

“Oh? How did you all find that out?” Gu Fei asked.

“The news has already spread all over the city! Lushness, that b*tch... She’s losing her mind while looking pale in the Bounty Assignment Hall. My fellow brothers find it to be quite an enjoyable sight,” the person explained.

Gu Fei smiled faintly and reiterated, “So why exactly are you guys looking for me?”

“It’s nothing. We just want to befriend you, brother,” the person answered, “I’m Dusky Cloud, by the way. How should we address

you, brother?”

Gu Fei shook his head, not saying a word.

“It seems like our brother here doesn’t trust us!” Dusky Smile smiled wryly, adding, “With your current situation, it’s only right for you to remain cautious.”

Gu Fei laughed and said, “So let’s walk our separate ways, then!” He prepared to change his direction and part ways with the four.

“Please wait, brother!” Dusky Cloud caught up to Gu Fei once more.

“Is there anything else?” Gu Fei’s feet did not stop moving at all.

“I’m actually from a guild called North Autumn in Yueye City. To tell you the truth, small guilds like ours have always been oppressed by Past Deeds. We’ve all been enduring their suppression for a long time now. We’re thinking of joining our forces to teach those bastards of Past Deeds a harsh lesson. Since brother here also bears a grudge against Past Deeds, why don’t you join forces with us?” Dusky Cloud kept on using ‘brother’ to address Gu Fei.

Gu Fei stopped his footsteps and said, “Sounds good.”

Dusky Cloud nodded his head, “My guild specifically sent me to seek you out for further negotiations. These three are the representatives of the other three guilds. With the might of our four guilds combined, we can definitely oppose Past Deeds.”

“If that’s the case, why is there still a need for me?” Gu Fei asked.

“Uhh... Let me be frank, then! Past Deeds has been continuously oppressing small guilds like ours. They’re either kill-stealing our monsters when we grind or poaching our strong guild members to their side. While there’s a fair share of members in our four guilds, most of our guild members are only casual players. We lack someone as ferocious as you, brother! You’re someone who can pit himself against ten opponents at once! If we’ve someone

formidable like you on our side, it'll surely be a threat to the opposing experts of Past Deeds. Plus, it'll greatly boost our teammates' morale!" Dusky Cloud was getting more excited, the longer he talked.

"You've got a point," Gu Fei agreed.

"What's more, we have a chance of a lifetime right now," Dusky Cloud continued.

"Oh?"

"Every Past Deeds' player has accepted the 'Bounty Mission' targeting you right now, brother. Meaning, their entire guild will be making their way toward your coordinates. Because of that, we'll be able to lure them easily into our ambush," Dusky Cloud explained.

"Ambush?" Gu Fei asked, puzzled.

"A hundred Archers and a hundred Mages are currently lying in wait on both sides of Yeming Valley over there. As long as brother head over in that direction, the Past Deeds' players will surely follow as well. That's when the Archers and Mages on the cliffs will launch their assault. We've tested it before; the shooting range of Archers and the spells of Mages can reach into the valley from the two cliffs. We can seriously incapacitate them in one go, and the melee job classes will then charge inside to wipe out the Past Deeds' remaining members. Every Past Deeds' member will surely drop a level. Is there anything more gratifying than this?" Dusky Cloud said earnestly.

Gu Fei laughed, "So you don't really wish to rely on my capabilities... instead, you want to use me as bait to lure Past Deeds into your trap."

Dusky Cloud laughed uproariously, "Why risk ourselves to clash headlong with them when there's such an easy way? As long as brother gives us the go-ahead, we'll start to set things up.

Everything will be ready in fifteen minutes, tops.”

Gu Fei sighed, “How unfortunate. Even if I agree to your plan, it’ll be impossible for it to succeed.”

Dusky Cloud’s expression changed, “Why?”

Gu Fei merely laughed, “A hundred Archers? A hundred Mages? It’s highly unlikely to keep things under wraps if you gather these two forces together. Are you planning to carry this out by announcing it on your guild channel or by using a private chat to inform everyone? Out of the two hundred players that you hand-picked, is there none who’s a friend of a Past Deeds’ member? This is just a game, after all. Gathering everyone in mere fifteen minutes? That sounds too ambitious. Are there two hundred people standing by online to receive your orders at any given time?”

“Uhh... Of course not all two hundred of them will be online at the same time. But there’s not much difference if we can just gather up about that number of people. Perhaps, even a hundred people will suffice, too,” Dusky Cloud said tentatively.

Gu Fei was still laughing, “Alright, stop it with all this bluffing. Your lie is simply too grand with too many loopholes.”

“Is brother implying...” Dusky Cloud felt enraged, “That I’m lying?”

“Of course,” Gu Fei affirmed confidently, “You don’t even have a plan involving two hundred people in the first place.”

“F*ck! If that’s the case, why would I waste my time rambling all that to you?”

“Why? Because of this!” Gu Fei suddenly stepped to the right and pivoted on the sole of his foot, slashing backward with his sword at the space behind him. An anguished cry was heard in the air, and the figure of a Thief emerged from nothingness. The Thief had a dagger in his hand, and he was just about to Backstab Gu Fei.

“Must be tough to remain on Stealth while chasing after us, huh?” Gu Fei smiled lightly at the Thief, effectively stopping his attack with one cut. He stared coldly at the four – no, the five of them.

“Leave! I don’t want to increase my PK value any further,” Gu Fei said to them.

The five stared at one another. Suddenly, the Thief who had been slashed by Gu Fei snapped. He lunged at Gu Fei with a stabbing motion, yelling, “Hurry up and charge! He won’t dare—ugh!”

The Thief did not get to finish his words, as Gu Fei had already pierced him with his sword once more. He rotated his body to evade the stab of the Thief and followed on with a downward slash, resulting into the death of the Thief.

“I said I don’t want to increase my PK value any further. It doesn’t mean that I won’t dare to do it,” Gu Fei warned the remaining four.

Dusky Cloud’s face was vacillating between fear and anger, while the other three were at a loss. They did know whether to leave immediately or pull out their weapons and fight.

“Are you a friend of No Smile?” Gu Fei suddenly asked.

“How did you know that?!” Dusky Cloud asked in shock.

Gu Fei smiled wryly, “For ‘Bounty Mission’, there’s no option of forming a temporary group between players to do the mission together. So those who accept a mission for the reward are usually alone. You guys are acting together to set me up, so it’s obvious that your goal is to kill me and not to get the mission reward. For someone to harbor such intention, it can only be No Smile besides those of Past Deeds. Seeing how sincere you looked when you’re gritting your teeth and talking about Past Deeds just now, you’re definitely not someone from that guild. That can only mean that you’re No Smile’s friend.”

Dusky Cloud revealed a dumbfounded expression, “You managed to guess it from just that?”

“I’m in a hurry right now... Just send my regards to No Smile,” Gu Fei turned around and started running away.

An Archer among them sneakily pulled out his bow and arrow, but Dusky Cloud reached over to stop him, “Don’t play with fire.”

“What’s wrong?”

“He’s even aware that a Thief on Stealth was lurking behind. He must have some sort of detection equipment on him,” Dusky Cloud replied.

“What do we do, then?”

“F*ck! What else can we do but endure it since we’re no match for him! We’re bullied by Past Deeds every d*mn day; something like this should be easier to endure!” Dusky Cloud retorted angrily.

“So who’re we supporting? That guy or Past Deeds?”

“Support, my a*s! It’s best if they all perish,” Dusky Cloud cursed while leading the three toward the opposite direction.

“Old Cloud! I’m starting to think that your impromptu plan to ambush Past Deeds in Yeming Valley is very fascinating!” someone said suddenly.

“Fascinating, my a*s! Where the hell do you think I can find two hundred people? If I had two hundred people with me, I’d take them all onto the rooftops to sneak up on those Past Deeds’ bastards every day,” Dusky Cloud said resentfully.

“How about seeking that guy again for a real cooperation?” one of them suggested.

“Cooperation, my a*s! No Smile is my buddy! That guy slew him and dropped his level for eight times, which is the same as dropping my level for eight times. You want me to cooperate with him? In your dreams!”

“If things keep going like this, there’s no future for us in Yueye City!”

“M*th*rf*ck*r! That fu*king trash dropped eight levels of No Smile, yet he only dropped one level of that bi*ch, Lushness! He should’ve bucked up to slay Lushness and reduce her level to zero! That son of a bi*ch...” Dusky Cloud kept on cussing along the way.

“Achoo!” Gu Fei, who was on the run, sneezed.

“Master, you’ve got a cold!” said Coward’s Savior who was about five meters away.

“Call me ‘Master’ again and I’ll slay you for real!” Gu Fei said angrily.

Chapter 81 - Fighting while Eating

Over in Yunduan City and inside a private room at Ray's Bar....

Young Master Han was fiddling with a money pouch, causing it to produce jingling noises. "I'm finally rich again!" as he said this, all sorts of emotions welled up inside him.

Royal God Call, who was sitting beside Young Master Han, gazed enviously at his dark red money pouch. Drooling over it, he asked, "How much money is inside that?" In Parallel World, a dark red money pouch could hold up to 1000 gold coins.

"420 gold coins," Young Master Han said proudly, "Order whatever you want; it's on me."

Brother Assist was about to speak up when Young Master Han narrowed his eyes at him, "You know what's appropriate to order, right?"

"Of course," Brother Assist smilingly said. He then called Ray over and ordered five glasses of the cheapest liquor.

"Where's Sword Demon?" War Without Wounds asked as he took his glass of liquor.

"Grinding! He'll be arriving soon," Young Master Han answered.

"Tsk tsk," Brother Assist sighed in admiration, "Miles must have ignited a fire in him! I noticed that everyone's eagerness to level up is quite high lately!"

Everyone remained silent. Gu Fei's ascent to level 31 had caused quite an impact to these few gaming experts.

"Have you guys been browsing the forums?" Brother Assist suddenly asked.

"What's new?" Young Master Han asked after taking a swig from his freshly served liquor.

"Yueye City's biggest guild is currently hunting Miles. They seem

to know that he's Fugitive 27149," Brother Assist relayed.

"Did that guy have poop as his zodiac sign? Why are flies buzzing around him wherever he goes?" Young Master Han sarcastically asked.

As he was saying this, the curtain of their private room was lifted up. An exhausted Sword Demon walked inside, falling backward onto a seat while saying to the four, "I just received a letter from Miles."

"A letter? The kind that we have to retrieve from a mailbox by the city gate?" Royal God Call asked.

Sword Demon nodded his head. At each of the city's four gates, a mailbox stood close-by. The players used them to mail letters or items. Friends, who had not spawned in the same city on the first day of the game's open beta, usually used those mailboxes to provide monetary or equipment support to one another. Correspondences in the form of a written letter, however, were rare to come by. Although the players communicating through letters were not restricted to a certain word count, only a few would have so much to convey that they had to resort to writing a physical letter in Parallel World – unless they were writing a love letter.

Everyone threw Sword Demon a weird look as soon as they thought of that.

Sword Demon took out the letter from his dimensional pocket and tossed it onto the table.

"Can we?" the rest asked while looking at the letter, "There's no untold secret between you two, right?"

Sword Demon rolled his eyes. He did not even bother to answer them.

Everyone lunged forward to snatch the letter at the same time. In the end, the Agility-based Royal God Call got it first. Ever since

that last incident where they each snatched the reward from Amethyst Rebirth on their own, the gang had all been working hard to improve their reaction speed. At present, their reflex and reaction speed were basically the same. But when it came to the actual speed of carrying out an action, the one who had added points toward Agility was still at an advantage.

“I’ll read it aloud!” Royal God Call ardently opened the piece of letter.

“‘Hello to Brother Sword Demon and the other fellow experts.’ That’s the greeting. ‘You have all been on my mind as I’m writing this. To think that it has been such a long time since—uhh—so many hours have passed since I left Yunduan City. I’m now in another city near Yunduan called Yueye. One can reach this place by trekking through the Oolong Mountain Range for three hours. The PvP culture is strong over here, and the local players are suffering from a big guild’s terrorization. I managed to complete a chain quest in a village called Yeguang near Yueye City. Afterward, I found myself fortuitously reaching level 31, even acquiring two pieces of new equipment along the way. Ho ho ho!’ Ah, sh*t, he’s quite the braggart.”

Royal God Call continued reading after his unsolicited remark, “‘I miss Brother Sword Demon and all you fellow experts very much right now. Of course, I miss Yunduan City as well. I can only wait until my PK points are cleared off before returning and meeting you all again. Until then, farewell.’”

“That’s it?” everyone asked.

Royal God Call nodded his head.

One among them snatched the letter away, inspected it word for word, and then passed it to another.

“He must be bored out of his mind to be writing something like this,” Royal God Call commented.

Young Master Han was the last one to get a hold of the letter. He scanned the content of it a few times before saying, “This letter was signed by Thousand Miles Drunk, but it’s not actually sent from his mailbox.”

Sword Demon nodded his head as confirmation, “It’s sent by someone called Coward’s Savior.”

“Seems like that guy is trapped to the point that he can’t even deliver a letter by himself,” Young Master Han smirked, feeling a slight degree of schadenfreude.

“Is there a place in-game where somebody can get trapped but won’t die?” War Without Wounds asked curiously, “Safe zones, perhaps?”

“Someone who has accepted his ‘Bounty Mission’ can still slay him inside safe zones. He’s clearly not in prison. His level hasn’t dropped either... That’s weird,” Brother Assist said wonderingly.

Young Master Han got up slowly, “Let’s go.”

“Where to?” everybody asked.

“To that trouble magnet’s location,” Young Master Han curtly said.

In a valley called Youye outside Yueye City, Gu Fei, the trouble magnet, was sitting beside a bonfire while eating the chunk of grilled meat in his hand.

“You ain’t half bad at this, Coward! How high is your crafting level as a Chef?” Gu Fei asked this to Coward’s Savior, who was sitting at the opposite side, as he continued eating.

“There’s no level for crafting skills only proficiency! I didn’t practice for that long, so my proficiency is at 200 points!” Coward’s Savior answered.

“Oh!” Gu Fei did not know how many proficiency points one should have to be considered as highly proficient, so he made no

further comment.

“Please don’t call me, Coward. I’m called Coward’s Savior! My name’s meaning changes once you skip the second word,” Coward’s Savior implored.

“Stop calling me ‘Master’, and I won’t call you Coward,” Gu Fei countered.

“I’ve stopped calling you that in ages!” Coward’s Savior cried.

“True! Actually, I’m just returning the favor for all the times you’ve called me ‘Master’ back then!” Gu Fei said. He had finally found a way to stop Coward’s Savior from calling him ‘Master’.

Coward’s Savior felt like weeping, yet no tears came out of him. All he could do was occupy his mind with handling the grilled meat on top of the fire.

Gu Fei, who was chewing on his meat, hurriedly scrambled up to his feet after checking the time. With a sword in hand and the grilled meat in the other, he faced toward a specific direction and yelled, “Repeating Fireball!”

A flaming dragon rose from the tip of his blade, as Gu Fei continued chewing on his chunk of meat.

“Go!” Gu Fei swallowed the chewed meat and yelled this.

The flaming dragon shot out from the blade’s tip and instantly split into four smaller fireballs, before heading straight toward the specified direction.

Nothing was over in that direction, but Coward’s Savior, who was watching everything, did not seem to be bothered by that fact. It was as if he had gotten used to seeing Gu Fei act like this. Just as the four fireballs spiraled two meters apart forward, the empty space ahead began to turn dim. And then... A newly spawned monster was blasted by the incoming fireballs.

The monster roared and charged toward Gu Fei.

“Fireball! Shoot!” Gu Fei chanted again while he was munching on another chunk of meat.

A small ball of fire flew out and exploded on the monster, leaving nothing but smoke behind.

“Bravo!” Coward’s Savior complimented reflexively, having grown used to seeing such a scene.

If the scene had been witnessed by another player, his or her eyeballs would have probably popped out by now.

Youye Valley was a level 50 grinding map. This meant that the monsters inside were around level 50.

As for the level of players in Parallel World right now? They were of course still stuck at level 30, except for this apparently uber-player who had managed to reach level 31 first. Fighting monsters twenty levels above his was a sight that would leave even the game designers in tears if they saw it.

Ye Xiaowu was indeed in tears as he saw Gu Fei easily handling the monsters while munching on a chunk of grilled meat inside Youye Valley.

It was the monitoring team that had caught wind of the current situation this time. Upon learning that a player was inside a level 50 grinding map, which was supposed to be empty at this point, the team started conducting an investigation. In the end, they found nothing that they should be concerned about – well, aside from the excessively high Magic Attack Power of the individual’s gear. The monitoring team checked Gu Fei’s equipment and suspected that someone had let Gu Fei obtain a high-grade gear early in this game through the back door.

Ye Xiaowu, who had repeatedly shown interest to Gu Fei, was of course everyone’s prime suspect.

When Ye Xiaowu was called over to the monitoring room, he smiled wryly and took out the footage that he had prepared long

ago, “This is his entire process of doing the chain quest. See for yourselves if there’s a part that violates the rules.”

The entire group convened to analyze the footage.

M*th*rf*ck*r, I knew this would happen eventually! Ye Xiaowu sighed. He had been expecting something like this to happen ever since Gu Fei completed his chain quest and obtained Midnight Spirit Robe and Moonlit Nightfalls. He felt slightly relieved when he noticed that Gu Fei was not fond of using spells and was more partial to using a sword to slash and hack at his foes.

Who knew that this fellow would suddenly be enlightened and start incorporating spells into his attacks?

But after learning of Gu Fei’s current predicament, Ye Xiaowu could only laugh miserably.

The high-grade equipment allowed Gu Fei to possess high Magic Attack Power, enabling him to fight monsters beyond his level.

Meanwhile, Gu Fei’s all-Agility build and his unique techniques allowed him to evade the monsters’ attacks with ease.

Take a Thief for example; if a Thief focused on dividing points toward Agility and Strength, he or she would achieve a slightly faster pace and lower Attack Power than Gu Fei at level 50. That alone would be enough for the Thief to grind on level 50 monsters. As for the current Gu Fei, he could of course do the same thing.

Mages had the lowest HP and the weakest defense; however, this job class had the strongest AOE attack to make up for these weaknesses. And yet, Gu Fei had never utilized a Mage’s biggest advantage!

Ye Xiaowu went through Gu Fei’s data and was aware that he had not even learned the level 24 spell, Descending Wheel of Flames. If he had learned that spell and casted it in the level 50 grinding map, no other players in the entire gaming server could have held a candle to his leveling speed.

Currently, the guy was casting the same two spells to eliminate those monsters near him. As for the rest of the super high-level monsters in Youye Valley, he was using them to ward off the players hunting for him while waiting for his PK value to become nil. Ye Xiaowu could only put on a forced smile after seeing this.

Speaking of which, the guy seemed to be a spell-casting savvy, especially with his near perfect grasp of the timing to release spells. He was almost on par with a Priest that excelled in grasping the timing for bestowing Heal.

Little did Ye Xiaowu know that Gu Fei was bragging about the same thing to Coward's Savior!

"Timing! Do you know what that means? The art of hidden weapons is all about timing.

"Hitting a wooden pole sticking to the ground and a target moving about is miles apart. No opponent will stand still like a pole and allow you to strike it at your convenience, so you must grasp the timing well. Figure out the target's pace and pinpoint its next step. That's how you land your attacks perfectly on the target with your hidden weapon.

"If you're up against experienced opponents, they'll surely change their pace often. Naturally, it's going to be hard to hit the spot you're aiming at. That's when you need to put more strength into your wrist and fingers to boost the throwing speed of your hidden weapon! When your attack speed reaches a specific level, you can pretty much ignore your opponent's change of pace, savvy?"

"Savvy!" Coward's Savior answered with reverence and awe.

Gu Fei was overjoyed by Coward's Savior's enthusiastic response. To think that there's someone passionate about kung fu inside this game! My mouth's a little dry from all that talking. I'll just take some respite. Since I've nothing to do again, should I write to another person? Gu Fei pondered on.

Chapter 82 - Kung Fu Lover

The members of the game monitoring team were repeatedly playing the footage of how Gu Fei completed his chain quest. There was no recording of Gu Fei's fight with Mountain Bandit Leader Sooto, which had led to his discovery of the chain quest, so the team could regrettably not view it; Fleeting Smile had yet to regard Gu Fei highly at that time.

"This part!" One of the monitoring staff paused the footage, indicated the figures of Gu Fei and Xiaoyu crouching by the church, and asked Ye Xiaowu, "What did he see here that prompted him to search for Murphy next?"

Ye Xiaowu shook his head, "I don't know."

"What sorts of clues can quest-takers find here?" The monitoring team was unfamiliar with the details of any Parallel World's chain quests.

"Quest-takers with high proficiency in the Herbalist crafting profession can discover that Murphy's bloodstain on the ground is not human blood," Ye Xiaowu answered.

"It doesn't seem like he found that out," one of the monitoring staff remarked.

"He didn't," Ye Xiaowu nodded his head in affirmation.

"Anything else suspicious besides that?" everyone compared facts with one another.

"No. Nothing's unusual with the data, including the Final Boss fight. If anything is unusual, it's his great fighting prowess!" someone stated.

"How do we explain that suspicious part concerning Murphy's bloodstain by the church, then?" Everyone in the monitoring team eyed Ye Xiaowu.

Ye Xiaoyu simply shrugged his shoulders, “He probably just got lucky! It’s also possible that he didn’t know how to proceed further with the quest, so he grasped at straws by asking about the deceased Murphy’s background.”

Watching the footage five more times, the monitoring team still found nothing that violated the game’s rules and designs. The only thing left questionable was whether some staff had given Gu Fei clues regarding the chain quest or not. With that in mind, they once again focused their gazes on Ye Xiaowu.

Ye Xiaowu had a relaxed demeanor and did not feel burdened by their gazes. At most, he could be accused of having a loose mouth for accidentally mentioning that the chain quest’s setting was in Yeguang Village; however, that was a detail that Eddie would have mentioned during Gu Fei’s acceptance of ‘Eddie’s Mission’. It just so happened that Gu Fei had not paid attention to Eddie’s explanation of the quest details, nor did he manage to find out more about the matter on his own. More than anyone else, Ye Xiaowu wanted to know just what Gu Fei had discovered back then at the church.

The monitoring team would only act when there was a solid proof and would never arbitrarily accuse any in-game players of cheating; naturally, they would also not jump to conclusions regarding the matter with Ye Xiaowu. In the end, they only asked him this, “Those two pieces of equipment he obtained, if we judge them based on the leveling system, how high will their levels be?”

“Around level 70 or so,” Ye Xiaowu answered.

Everyone remained silent. Easily taking care of level 50 monsters was truly not unfathomable for a level 30 player who had gotten his hands on two pieces of level 70 equipment and was capable of unleashing their potential.

“In other words, this chain quest has a level 70 difficulty. Yet, a level 30 player completed it?” What the monitoring team meant

was obvious: The chain quest's level of difficulty was somewhat imbalanced.

“Our chain quests are designed with the ordinary players' capabilities in mind! Look here! Could just anyone else prevent the Final Boss from equipping the Fang of the Wolf King? Forget about a level 30 account; why don't you guys try doing the quest with a level 70 account and see if it can be accomplished?! Not everyone is that extraordinary. So you're all saying that we should use this superhuman as gauge for the quests difficulty just because he's capable of doing what others can't?” Ye Xiaowu countered as he pointed to the screen replaying Gu Fei's fight with the NPC Adrian.

Everyone remained silent.

“If there's nothing else, then I'm leaving,” Ye Xiaowu left. It was strange. He himself had been hoping for Thousand Miles Drunk to get banned. And yet, why did he root for him just now?

Meanwhile, inside the game, at the entrance to Youye Valley outside Yueye City... A group of Past Deeds' players was at their wits' end. The one leading this group, Vast Lushness, appeared to be even more agitated. Many non-Past Deeds players were near the valley entrance as well. These players were all pretending to grind on the few monsters close-by while actually enjoying the sight of Past Deeds losing their cool. They were all harmoniously working together to pretend to grind levels. In fact, five among these players would often 'accidentally' let a level 22 monster escape their clutches for five minutes just to appear struggling in this grinding map that was already sparsely populated by monsters.

“Even the Thieves can't go inside using Stealth?”

A Thief shook his head, “No. The super high-level monsters inside can easily sense our presence even with Stealth. Our four guild mates even died there.”

“And you did not see a lick of that guy's shadow?”

“Yes. He’s nowhere in sight,” the Thief answered, feeling disheartened.

Those of Past Deeds had chased after Fugitive 27149’s coordinates until they got here. None of them believed that Gu Fei was inside Youye Valley at first. But after circling around Youye Valley’s perimeters for a few times and confirming these areas’ coordinates, they could only grudgingly accept the fact that Gu Fei was indeed inside the valley.

A Past Deeds’ team composed of different job classes had previously entered the valley, but they did not get far inside. The monsters within were simply too strong for the group’s Attack Power and Defense to work against those. The Priests had to give their all into keeping everyone alive, needing the joint efforts of two or three of them just to keep one teammate alive at a given time. While they did clear off the monsters nearby, they consumed a high amount of HP and mana in return. It left them with not enough time to recover their lost HP and mana. If they proceeded into other spots with greater monster density, the only outcome for them would be a team wipeout.

A second Past Deeds’ group composed of Thieves was sent inside following the first team’s return. This group of Thieves was tasked to find Gu Fei by utilizing Stealth. However, the monsters inside possessed high perception and were able to sense their presence even while they were on Stealth mode. Without the support of Priests, four among this group of vulnerable Thieves quickly got killed off. The rest activated Fleetfoot and barely made it out alive.

Vast Lushness almost lost it, “He’s just a Mage! How is he able to stay alive inside for this long?”

Nobody could answer that question, as none of them knew that Gu Fei already possessed the might of a level 50 Mage – or even stronger. After all, no level 50 Mage with the same Magic Attack Power would ever possess the current Gu Fei’s speed.

Inside Youye Valley, Gu Fei was asking Coward's Savior, "When you came in earlier, did you see many Past Deeds' members outside?"

Coward's Savior nodded his head, "Yes."

"How did you enter unscathed, then?" Gu Fei asked, puzzled.

"I covered my face!" Coward's Savior said, "Lots of them, including those after you, have their faces covered."

"Ah, they must be fearful of my revenge!" Gu Fei smiled wryly. It appeared that his in-game reputation had already been fully defined.

"They didn't stop you from coming in?" Gu Fei asked.

"What's there to stop? They thought that I'm seeking death by walking in," Coward's Savior replied matter-of-factly. He then recalled his earlier fear and added, "I'd really be dead if you didn't come over to pick me up, though."

"Well said," Gu Fei remarked, "Look. I wrote another letter. Come on, I'll escort you out."

Gu Fei thought of something as he was handing the letter to Coward's Savior, "Oh, yeah. If you go out there without a scratch on you, they'll suspect you."

"Yup! In fact, they're already suspicious of me earlier. I had to put on a terrified look and pretend not to know that this is a level 50 grinding map," Coward's Savior recounted.

"You're quite sharp." After praising Coward's Savior, Gu Fei added him as a friend, "That's me."

Coward's Savior was so thrilled that he was at a loss of what to do, repeatedly saying, "Neat... Neat...."

Gu Fei felt slightly embarrassed by Coward's Savior's reaction. This guy; besides being a little annoying with how he rambles on, his other characteristics seem okay. He appears to be genuinely

interested in kung fu as well.

“Did you really learn Mantis Fist Style before?” Gu Fei asked.

“I’ve studied about it,” Coward’s Savior answered.

“How have you studied it?” Gu Fei pressed on.

“By reading books,” Coward’s Savior replied.

“Ohhh...” Gu Fei figured everything out, “No wonder you don’t know of its footwork. Most published kung fu manuals don’t really mention about the footwork. He he... Learning kung fu that way isn’t that different from following a radio exercise.”

“Can you teach me, then?” Coward’s Savior’s face was brimming with expectation.

“Uhh. I’m not that well-versed on the Seven Stars Mantis Fist Style; the one I’ve learned is the Six Harmonies Mantis Fist Style, which is different from yours. From what I’ve seen, your stances have taken roots already. It’ll be difficult for you to replace them with Six Harmonies Style now. So I’ll have to research more about the Seven Stars Mantis Fist Style before I can teach you!” Gu Fei explained.

“Thank – Thank you so much!” Coward’s Savior nodded his head and bent his back.

“You like kung fu that much?” Gu Fei liked kung fu as well, and he made no attempt to hide this from everyone. But compared to Coward’s Savior, he realized that his passion for kung fu was still modest.

“Kung fu produces no cowards!” Coward’s Savior said with conviction, clenching his fists.

Gu Fei laughed at that. Gu Fei had become chattier now that their conversation revolved around kung fu. He discussed the subject unceasingly with Coward’s Savior while dealing with the monsters that would spawn from time to time. Noticing that Gu Fei was a

kung fu practitioner, Coward's Savior could not help but ask curiously, "Why did you choose to become a Mage?"

The answer dawned on him before Gu Fei could speak, though, "Oh, I get it! It's to better train yourself right?"

Gu Fei did not know whether to laugh or cry at his words, "While this VRMMO lets you accumulate combat experiences, the monsters' pre-programmed attacks and most players' unfamiliarity with kung fu can only provide minimal experiences. In fact, they're so meager that they're practically useless. That's why I only play this game for the purpose of using kung fu to my heart's content. If I find ways to improve my kung fu here, I just consider them as perks!"

"Did you find ways?" Coward's Savior asked.

Gu Fei nodded his head, "I already found some, such as how much strength to apply, how to determine the right attack angle, how to time an attack, how to choose the correct attack route, and so on. But they're stuff I had to figure out and master by myself due to online games being different from reality. In online games, a player's job class and stat point allocation decide how high his or her speed, strength, and HP will be. An ordinary Thief needs three or four stabs to kill someone in-game; in reality, one strike is enough to kill a person."

Gu Fei startled himself with his words. Never did he expect that he would already ponder about the art of killing someone just by comparing the experiences gained in reality and in a game. It seemed like the killing in-game had totally awakened his killing drive.

Coward's Savior obviously did not understand all of Gu Fei's speech, merely nodding his head repeatedly, "The fighting knowledge that we pick up in-game... might not necessarily be useful in real life?"

Gu Fei nodded his head, "The takeaway in this is that your speed

and strength in-game are a far cry of what they're in reality. If you really want to improve your kung fu skills through this VRMMO, you should fine-tune your stats to match your real self!"

"Is that what you've been doing?" Coward's Savior asked.

"Me?" Gu Fei laughed, "You're wrong. I'm mainly playing this VRMMO to use my kung fu. Training is just something that comes along with it. I don't really have high standard; I only want my stats to be at a level where I can use kung fu fully. But recently, I've found out that spells can be harnessed like kung fu as well."

Chapter 83 - Eliminating a threat for the people

While Gu Fei and Coward's Savior were discussing about kung fu inside Youye Valley, the players outside were slowly becoming more and more restless. In the end, the players who had come to watch the spectacle or had taken the mission in their hopeless wish to fight with Gu Fei returned to Yueye City one after another.

Currently, only the players of Past Deeds and the group of Dusky Cloud – No Smile's friend – and his buddies remained.

Dusky Cloud and company continued to put up the farce of grinding levels on the monsters nearby.

"Old Cloud, should we return to the city as well?" one of his buddies suddenly asked.

Not much could be said about Youye Valley's entrance in terms of serving as a grinding spot. Although the players were able to grind on monsters suitable to their levels in the area, the monsters that could be found were few and far between. It was as if the NPC mobs had only been placed there for ornamental purpose. Obviously, this meant that the valley entrance was not a map designed for players to grind levels.

"No," Dusky Cloud gazed at the Past Deeds' guild members, "I feel great just by seeing the bunch of clowns from Past Deeds make a fool of themselves. You guys can head back first. I'll enjoy this scene for a while longer."

"Be careful. Vast Lushness might trouble you if she grows frustrated," someone warned.

"I'm not afraid of her," Dusky Cloud laughed dryly, "I have No Smile's dagger with me. If the Past Deeds' men come over, I can activate Vanish and play a game of hide-and-seek with them."

"No Smile's Zephyr's Whisper? Why do you have it?" someone

asked in surprise.

“The fear of death got to No Smile. He didn’t want to lose the dagger, so he mailed it over to me,” Dusky Cloud explained.

“Oh. Have fun playing with that, then. We’re returning to the city first,” his companions said as they left.

Dusky Cloud swished the dagger, continuing to cut the few monsters close-by while keeping an eye on the Past Deeds’ guild members.

“Lushness, should we take our leave, too?” Blue Ease could tell that many of their men had long lost their patience to lie in wait for Gu Fei.

“How long have we been waiting here?” Vast Lushness asked.

“Close to four hours,” Blue Ease looked at the time before glancing at the mission log, “His PK value is now at 9 points from the original 11.”

“Alright, all of you can retreat! Let’s not waste everyone’s time waiting here,” Vast Lushness sighed.

“What about you?” Blue Ease asked.

“I’ll continue waiting for that guy to come out!” Vast Lushness spat.

“That’s not a good idea!” Blue Ease exclaimed, “If even several players together can’t subdue him, you alone won’t be able to do so as well. Let’s just station a Thief on Stealth here to inform us if the Mage finally exits the valley.”

“Stealth is useless. I think he has an item that can detect it,” Vast Lushness said, “I’ll stay behind. I’m already at level 29, anyway. It’s no biggie even if he drops me by another level. You guys can leave first!”

“Want me to stay with you?” Blue Ease suggested.

“Just leave,” Vast Lushness shooed everyone away, “I’ll call you

guys if something comes up.”

“We’ll head to a nearby grinding spot, then!” after saying this, he brought his grinding buddies away from the place. As for the other members, they all dispersed into different directions.

Vast Lushness tidied herself up, and then she began brandishing her magic staff around to grind on the monsters nearby. As a Priest with Intelligence-and Spirit-based build, handling the sparse monsters around was not a problem with her Holy Ball that dealt quite a bit of damage and her fast casting speed.

At this very moment, the nearby Dusky Cloud’s heartbeat quickened.

Chance! A rare opportunity like this of the Past Deeds’ lackeys not being around that shrew should not be missed! This arrogant b*tch may think that nobody will dare kill her, but that’s not true anymore. After all, the method of wearing a mask has already abounded in Yueye City.

Everyone knew that the victim would not find out the murderer’s identity as long as the culprit wore a mask. As Dusky Cloud thought of this, he was almost tempted to try it himself. In the end, he gritted his teeth and activated his Stealth.

Given the Priest job class’ slow movement speed, Vast Lushness would have no way of avoiding Dusky Cloud’s swift attack. Even if Vast Lushness stubbornly tried to heal the damage, she would still eventually run out of mana. This was why Priests could not fight with other job classes on their own.

Dusky Cloud, who was on Stealth, edged closer to her. He looked around and saw some players passing by some distance away. He was sure that they were not from Past Deeds. After all, Dusky Cloud had personally seen each member of Past Deeds leave.

This is too great of an opportunity! Dusky Cloud swallowed his saliva as he crept behind Vast Lushness.

Backstab! Dusky Cloud successfully pierced Vast Lushness once with Zephyr's Whisper.

Vast Lushness was shocked by the sudden pain she felt. But as an experienced Priest, she did not waste time in finding out the culprit's identity; instead, she swiftly bestowed Heal on herself.

And yet, an unknown Priest's Heal beat Vast Lushness' Heal to the punch, as it landed on her body before her own could.

Dusky Cloud was an experienced player as well. Once he saw that Heal landed twice on Vast Lushness, he deduced that someone else had assisted her. Sweeping his gaze around, he saw a player with raised arms among the party of people he had spotted earlier.

It was the exact pose a Priest would make when bestowing Heal.

Dusky Cloud felt furious. Vast Lushness was notorious in Yueye City for her nefarious deeds, and he was actually doing the local players a favor by killing her! It was one thing to not help, but to actually interfere with his action was another! Just who was this irrational person? He suspected that the opponent did not clearly see that the woman he had attacked was Vast Lushness. Otherwise, any self respecting player of Yueye City would be able to determine who was in the right here. Just as he was about to reveal Vast Lushness' identity to them, an arrow whistled through the air and knocked him off his feet.

"M*th*rf*ck*ng D*CKS!" Dusky Cloud cursed. The damage from that Snipe had almost insta-killed him.

Vast Lushness had turned around by now. With a quick chant, she summoned Holy Ball out. Activating Vanish at the moment would not do much for Dusky Cloud, as Vanish did not equate to attack immunity. Being this close to Vast Lushness meant that her Holy Ball would reach him before he could activate Vanish and move away. Hence, only death awaited Dusky Cloud now.

Just as Dusky Cloud resigned himself to his fate, a healing light

unexpectedly enveloped his body. It was the unknown Priest's handiwork. The unknown Priest's Heal was on another level compared to Vast Lushness' Holy Ball, so the damage dealt by the latter's attack was easily negated by the healing properties of the former's skill.

The saved Dusky Cloud, however, felt more surprised than elated by this turn of event. This Priest acted so fast! This new Priest was able to bestow Heal on me before Vast Lushness' Holy Ball landed on me! Vast Lushness has Intelligence-and Spirit-based build, and yet her attack was easily nullified by this unknown Priest. Did this person actually add all points toward Spirit?

Dusky Cloud received another shock while he was watching the group draw closer. F*ck, here comes the Priest! And it's yet another female Priest!

When the group was close enough for Dusky Cloud to have a clearer look of the 'female Priest', he could not help but to be shocked again, F*ck me! It's just a guy that looks so much like a d*mn woman.

First he saved me, and then he saved the Thief, Vast Lushness was feeling baffled about what had just happened as well. She tried to unleash another attack on the Thief, yet Dusky Cloud had already activated the dagger's Vanish and disappeared from sight. Vast Lushness did not know where he was now, so she could only stay on her guard while taking note of the group of players approaching her.

There were five of them. She could tell that they were a Thief, Priest, Warrior, Knight, and Archer based on their equipment.

She was sure that they were not a grinding party, as no grinding party would have such a balanced job-class composition. Furthermore, a grinding party would always have a powerful AOE Mage in its ranks.

When the group finally arrived beside her, the Knight pointed

toward Youye Valley and asked Vast Lushness in a courteous manner, “Miss, what is this place called?”

“Youye Valley,” Vast Lushness answered.

“It’s here?” The Archer asked suspiciously.

“Are you questioning my ability to determine the correct coordinates?” the Priest asked icily.

This group of men saved me, and then proceeded to save that guy as well. Now that they’re in front of me, they’re not even bringing it up? Vast Lushness could not tell what was going on anymore. Even Dusky Cloud who was on Stealth was at a loss.

However, only one answer could explain their question and their ignorance of their whereabouts: They were not local players.

“Miss, is this a high-level grinding map?” the Knight continued to question Vast Lushness.

Vast Lushness nodded her head, “The monsters in this valley are at level 50.”

The Knight nodded. Four members of the group extended their hands toward the Archer, “Pay up!”

The Archer paled as he took out his money pouch from his dimensional pocket with a trembling hand. He counted out 40 gold coins and divided them into four portions.

These five men were of course the five pros that made up Young Master’s Elite mercenary group. They had made a bet before they set off. In light of Gu Fei’s coordinates not changing despite being hunted, the four had surmised that he was hiding in a high-level grinding map that the regular players dared not enter.

Only Royal God Call presumed that Gu Fei had used the previous method of hiding in a cave to weather the storm. As it turned out....

“No!” Royal God Call suddenly returned all the gold coins inside

the pouch although he had already separated it into four equal portions, “We’ve yet to find that man. There’s a chance he’s actually in a cave within the valley.”

“That’s not possible,” Young Master Han firmly rejected his hypothesis, “This regional map uses a similar geographic coordinate system to Yunduan City’s. Given that the numbers in the coordinates displayed are large, the chances of him being in a cave are almost non-existent.”

“Why didn’t you tell me this before?!” Royal God Call asked indignantly.

“B*llsh*t! If I told you earlier, I wouldn’t be earning 10 gold coins from you right now. Enough talking; just hand over the money already!” Young Master Han impatiently replied.

Royal God Call gazed accusingly at the other three men before him, yet they skillfully avoided his gaze. Obviously, the other three had already known of this fact.

“You’re all scums...” Royal God Call fumed, as he divided the gold coins once more.

Brother Assist patted his back, “Keep practicing! People will treat you as a joke if you call yourself a pro, yet you can’t even read coordinates.”

It was too late for Royal God Call to regret making the bet now.

“So what now? Do we go in or call him out?” War Without Wounds asked.

“Can we go inside?” Sword Demon stared at the entrance to the level 50 grinding map, eager to give it a try. He sincerely wished to be able to do whatever Gu Fei could do, not realizing that his initial thought of being on par with Gu Fei had now been replaced by a chasing-after-my-idol’s-shadow thought.

“He said he’s being chased by hordes of players, right? Why don’t I see anyone around, then?” Brother Assist said as he looked

everywhere.

“Am I not a player?!” Vast Lushness was riled up by his crass comment.

Brother Assist laughed at her words but did not say a word. This woman was just a Priest. Was there a Priest who could hunt a player alone?

Vast Lushness had already gleaned clues from the five’s snippets of conversation, “You guys came from Yunduan City to kill that Close Combat Mage, right?”

The five froze up in unison.

“How should we address you, Miss?” Brother Assist asked after a bit.

“My IGN is Vast Lushness,” she replied.

“What are you doing here all by yourself?” Brother Assist asked further.

“I’m waiting for that guy to come out,” Vast Lushness said harshly through gritted teeth. Her intentions were made apparent to everyone who could hear her.

The five exchanged looks.

“Kill?” Royal God Call asked on the mercenary channel.

Chapter 84 - Young Master of Blandishment

Despite it being very eventful, twenty-four hours had actually not passed yet since Gu Fei left Yunduan City. When Royal God Call asked “Kill?” on the mercenary channel, Gu Fei was the first one to respond, “Kill what?”

“He’s definitely bored...” everyone concluded.

“Do you know this chick called Vast Lushness?” Royal God Call asked Gu Fei on the mercenary channel.

“Do you guys know her as well?” Gu Fei answered with a question, feeling very astonished.

“You know her?”

“Not really. But I did slay her before,” Gu Fei replied.

“How cruel!” everyone lamented, “To think you’re actually willing to attack such a pretty lady!”

“The largest guild in Yueye City is called Past Deeds. Its guild leader is called Silver Moon. She’s his wife,” Gu Fei summarized her background to the group.

“Not bad. You’re actually well informed. You remind me of my younger self,” Brother Assist commended.

“You think too highly of me. I just happened to slay those two before,” Gu Fei downplayed.

Everyone did not know how to respond to his shameless low-key boasting. Young Master Han cleared his throat and asked Vast Lushness with a bright smile, “We’re here to look for Fugitive 27149. Are you perhaps also intending to kill him?”

The other mercenary group members immediately felt a chill run down their spines upon seeing Young Master Han’s smile. This person rarely smiled. Only either of the two conditions could make him display such an amiable smile: He was trying to pull a fast one

over someone or he had drunk too much liquor. And even if Young Master Han had drunk liquor earlier, he should have sobered up by now after walking for about three hours from Yunduan City to here. Meaning, his affable smile right now was due to the other condition. Vast Lushness appears to be out of luck, everyone thought. Unfortunately, they did not have a clue what Young Master Han was up to this time around.

“Yup!” Vast Lushness promptly answered Young Master Han’s query.

“But... Just you alone? You’re a Priest to boot,” Young Master Han said with mock sympathy, “That person is truly cruel. Savage, even.”

That’s too fake! everyone collectively thought, He clearly knows that she’s the wife of the biggest guild’s leader in Yueye City, yet here he is, pretending to be concerned about her welfare.

“He he he!” Vast Lushness giggled, “He’s just one man. My guild mates are all nearby!”

“Is that so?” Young Master Han still had that hypocritical smile plastered on his face, “That incident just now was a close shave, then!”

Too shameless! everyone thought, Trying to build rapport with her by mentioning his heroic deed a while ago, he clearly harbors ill intention!

Vast Lushness immediately expressed her gratitude toward Young Master Han’s timely rescue. “You’re a Priest, too!” she gushed. The two instantly left the other four players by the side as they animatedly discussed their experiences as Priests.

“What do you guys think?” Brother Assist asked the others.

“I wish for that Thief from before to reappear and kill these two. If that happens, we’ll not lift a finger to assist the two and just let them keep healing each other,” Royal God Call proposed. After five

minutes had passed, he whined, “Why is that Thief not making a move?! I can’t take this anymore!”

“How about I go ahead and do it myself?” Sword Demon asked, preparing to activate his Stealth.

“Forget it!” the experienced and dependable War Without Wounds held the two hot-blooded youngsters back.

Young Master Han and Vast Lushness began to discuss the current situation after concluding their chit-chat regarding the Priest job class. “Uhm... You and the others; what’s your grudge with that person in there?” Vast Lushness asked.

“We’re a mercenary group. Someone promised to pay us an exorbitant amount if we hunt him down,” Young Master Han explained.

“How should I address you?” Vast Lushness asked.

“Young Master Han!” Young Master Han introduced himself and pointed to the four men by the side, “And these are my lackeys.”

War Without Wounds had to exert immense strength to restrain the agitated Sword Demon from charging forward. Brother Assist had to prevent Royal God Call from firing an arrow upon hearing Young Master Han’s words as well.

“Not bad. They look pretty lively,” Vast Lushness regarded the lot.

“They’re passable. I guess they’ll do!” Young Master Han remarked.

Another round of struggling from the two pairs occurred.

“Actually, it’s not a good idea to wait for Fugitive 27149 here,” Young Master Han finally broached the main topic.

“Oh?”

“You tried to enter the level 50 grinding map and did not fare well, right?” Young Master Han asked. As Vast Lushness nodded

her head, he continued, “That’s precisely why that guy’s hiding inside; he wants to clear off his PK value undisturbed. Currently, he’s at 9 PK points, which means he’s got eighteen hours left. Are you prepared to wait for that long here?”

“He’ll get tired staying in there, eventually. I’m sure you understand as well. No matter how strong that Mage is, he’ll still have a tough time staying alive inside a level 50 map,” Vast Lushness said.

“Miles, are you feeling tired?” Royal God Call asked on the mercenary channel.

“Tired? Why would I? I’m roasting meat right now! It smells amazing!” Gu Fei answered.

They felt some touch of pity for Vast Lushness, “I really want her to wait here for eighteen hours, only to see Miles walk out of the valley licking his fingers after eating his fill of roast meat,” Royal God Call whispered.

Young Master Han was still giving counsel to Vast Lushness, “If he gets tired and exits the valley, where do you think he’ll go?”

“Back to the city to get offline,” Vast Lushness swiftly answered, since she had thought of this before as well.

“That’s right!” Young Master Han said, “But if he leaves the valley and sees you standing here, what do you think he’ll do?”

“Probably kill me,” Vast Lushness stated miserably.

Young Master Han nodded his head, “And then, he’ll return into the valley after cutting you down. It’s because he’s certain that a Priest isn’t his only ambusher. He’ll expect more people to be lying in wait for him.”

“Uhhh... What do I do, then?” Vast Lushness asked.

“Retreat. Leave this valley by a few hundred meters. Set your men up somewhere halfway back to Yueye City. Find members

whom he has never met before. Finally, don't wear your guild's emblem," Young Master Han gave a detailed advice.

"There're no grinding spots at the halfway point from here to the city. It won't be easy assigning people there!" Vast Lushness exclaimed.

"What has that got to do with anything?" Young Master Han smiled, "As long as he sees no ambushers around, he'll boldly exit the valley. That's when you call for people to block the valley entrance. As long as he can't find a way back inside, his new coordinates will be displayed in five minutes. He still has several hours left, so where else can he run off to?"

"Oh, yeah! I totally forgot about the coordinates refreshing every five minutes," Vast Lushness slapped her forehead, as she sheepishly explained to Young Master Han, "It's because his coordinates have remained the same for hours."

Young Master Han laughed politely, "It's not too late to remember about the coordinates now."

"Let's do it your way, then!" Vast Lushness decided, "Thanks for your advice!"

"Don't worry about it. We've the same target, after all," Young Master Han said.

"Right. How many levels do you need to drop him for your mission?" Vast Lushness asked.

"It's flexible. We're rewarded for every level he drops," Young Master Han lied smoothly.

"You'll have a huge payout, then!" Vast Lushness laughed, "We're totally killing him back to zero."

"That's wonderful!" Young Master Han exclaimed in fake delight.

In no time at all, Blue Ease and the other members of Past Deeds

Guild gathered once more outside Youye Valley. “What’s the matter, Lushness?” Blue Ease asked as he hurried over.

“We can’t keep waiting for him like this.” Vast Lushness began to lay out the plan Young Master Han had suggested to her, “Everyone here who hasn’t met that Mage, head to this halfway mark once you get the signal and intercept 27149. The rest of you, block the entrance once he exits the valley.”

“Wait a second!” Young Master Han suddenly interrupted.

“What’s the matter?” Vast Lushness looked at him.

“Did all of you guys pick up the ‘Bounty Mission’ for 27149?” Young Master Han asked as he gestured to all of them.

“Of course!” Vast Lushness answered.

Young Master Han laughed bitterly, “If a guy who has taken up the mission kills him, 27149 will automatically be sent to jail. How do you guys plan to drop him back to level 0, then?”

“Ah!” Vast Lushness once again slapped her forehead, “I forgot about that part, too. How annoying! I was very impulsive back then.”

“Maybe some here already have a different ‘Bounty Mission’, so they didn’t pick up the one for that guy,” Blue Ease said.

“Is there anyone here who didn’t pick up the ‘Bounty Mission’ for that Mage?” Vast Lushness asked aloud.

No one replied. Past Deeds was too united. Even those who had originally not picked it up finished their ‘Bounty Mission’ at hand to take the ‘Bounty Mission’ for 27149. It had already been more than three hours since then. All members no longer had their original ‘Bounty Mission’ and had long changed their target to 27149, putting all their effort to the guild. Since the system had set a rule that a ‘Bounty Mission’ could not be canceled unless the target cleared off all the PK points or was imprisoned, all of them were stuck to their current mission.

“Is there someone here who has just gotten online?!” Vast Lushness changed her question.

“It’s no use. Even if there’re some like that here, I’m afraid that just a few players won’t be able to deal with that guy,” Young Master Han said, “The mission-takers can’t participate in killing him, as they will just end up sending 27149 to jail.”

“So what do we do?” Vast Lushness asked him.

Young Master Han sighed deeply, “Looks like my group can’t slack off for this mission. We’ll help you guys out, then!” Young Master Han visibly showed his despondence.

“Really?”

“Yes. I’m the only one in my mercenary group to take up the mission. I’m a Priest, so I won’t be needed in the frontline,” Young Master Han explained.

“See, everyone? They’re what I call professionals. We need to learn more from these people,” Vast Lushness lectured her guild members.

“In this case, we’ll leave the task of blocking the valley entrance to you guys while we do the actual killing. How does that sound to you?” Young Master Han asked.

“Great,” Vast Lushness vigorously nodded her head.

“Tell your people not to attack that guy when they see him. I’m worried that they’ll end up killing him off after we significantly lower his HP,” Young Master Han reminded.

Vast Lushness immediately passed the instruction to her people.

“Oh, right. Have someone man the underground prison to prevent 27149 from turning himself in,” Young Master Han said, “It’ll be impossible to trace him once he leaves the prison after doing his stint inside. It’s convenient when we have his coordinates like now, so we don’t want this advantage to

disappear.”

Vast Lushness quickly nodded her head and delegated the necessary manpower to the task, “Guys, head to the underground prison to block its entrance once 27149’s coordinates start to move. There’s no need to fight with him. Warriors will just [tank](#) his attacks, and the Priests will heal the Warriors.”

All nodded their heads.

“Did we leave anything out?” Young Master Han thought aloud.

Blue Ease raised his hand, “I’ve something to ask.”

“Speak.”

“Can I know who you guys are?” Blue Ease asked.

“Oh, I forgot to introduce them,” Vast Lushness was the one who spoke, “These guys specially made their way from Yunduan City to hunt down 27149; Young Master Han and his lackeys.”

Lackeys! The four entangled among themselves for the third time.

Tank - Gaming term. Refers to how one would endure or redirect enemy attacks or attention toward one’s self in order to protect other characters or units.

Chapter 85 - Removing the Firewood from under the Pot

The Past Deeds' guild members were each assigned a role according to Young Master Han's strategy.

According to this arrangement, everyone did not need to be overly vigilant and just had to get into position once Fugitive 27149's coordinates started moving. They should not rush toward their respective positions either, as their hurried movement would only alert Fugitive 27149 that something was afoot. Therefore, the guild members would only block the entrance of Youye Valley after 27149 traveled quite a distance from it.

The thing they should note, however, was to not arbitrarily assault Fugitive 27149. Even if they bumped into him along the way, they must apologize and leave things at that.

"We need to lull him into a false sense of security. By creating such a scenario, we'll already accomplish half of the work," Young Master Han explained.

The Past Deeds' guild members were thoroughly impressed. In fact, the top brasses Blue Ease and Vast Lushness already had thoughts of attracting Young Master Han into their guild afterward.

"This will be a battle of attrition!" Young Master Han said, "Since he has high PK value on him, killing him once would mean dropping him by two levels today. But I reckon he'll immediately log off once he respawns at a safe zone. So we'll need someone to stake him out until he returns online. Oh, yes, leave someone by the Bounty Assignment Hall. Let's not give him any opportunity to turn himself in either. Find some men to seal off the exit to the other nearby designated log-off points as well, so as to guarantee that we can drop two levels off him today by killing him once without him managing to escape. I'm sure you guys know how

slippery that guy is.”

“Yes, that’s right!” Vast Lushness promptly appointed a few more people to be in charge of ‘manning’ the various log-off points.

“Do you have any manpower issues?” Young Master Han asked.

“Uh... We can still manage!” Vast Lushness replied. In truth, it was quite a strain to distribute their forces to a total of ten places, namely Youye Valley, underground prison, Bounty Assignment Hall, and the spawn points of the seven main job classes – which served as safe zones and log-off points. More importantly, they were instructed not to fight back, making this setup all the more frustrating.

“It’s okay. These are just safety measures. My group will be close behind. Even if he escapes and manages to make his way to a safe zone, your people there just need to delay him for a while until we catch up, which I believe is not a problem for your guildmates,” Young Master Han said.

“Yeah! Not a problem!” Vast Lushness nodded her head.

“If that’s the case, I’ll leave the preventive arrangement to you, and you guys can leave the hunting issue to us! As long as he can’t hide in any of those places, he’s definitely dead meat. We’re professionals, after all,” Young Master Han smiled.

“Thank you! Thank you guys for all this!” Vast Lushness said, looking very emotional.

“Don’t worry about it!” Young Master Han had a very calm expression, “Since everything’s settled, let’s all split up for now. Once his coordinates start to move, you guys just have to head to the respective spots and defend those. Message me and we’ll begin our hunt of him.”

“No problem!” Vast Lushness shook Young Master Han’s hand, “Pleasure working with you.”

“Pleasure working with you, too,” Young Master Han revealed

that warm smile of his one last time, as the guild members headed toward their assigned tasks.

Sword Demon and the rest of the mercenary group were standing by the side with blackened faces.

“We should go, too,” Young Master Han told them.

Royal God Call, who was about to say something, was patted on the back by Sword Demon. The latter then warned on the mercenary channel, “Don’t say a word.”

“Why?” Royal God Call felt puzzled.

“I saw a Thief enter Stealth mode not long ago. He may just be lurking near us, listening to our every word,” Sword Demon said.

“Oh...” Royal God Call understood. He quickly schooled his facial expression into an excited one and declared, “That guy’s dead for sure! Ha ha ha ha ha!”

“Tone your acting down! That’s overly dramatic!” Brother Assist criticized on the mercenary channel.

Sword Demon wiped the dagger he was holding, exuding a murderous aura, “That’s right. He’s a goner.”

“Mhm. Sword Demon’s acting is neither too dramatic nor too lukewarm. Just the right level,” Brother Assist critiqued in the channel, as he went along with them and loudly exclaimed, “To think we could get the help of such a large guild, this should save us plenty of time.”

“Indeed, nothing can go wrong now!” War Without Wounds quipped.

The greatest actor of them all, Young Master Han, nodded his head in agreement and said, “Let’s find somewhere to grind our levels for now.”

The five left at a normal pace. Over by the Past Deeds’ guild channel, Vast Lushness was indeed questioning a few Thieves she

had left behind to eavesdrop, “What did they say?”

“They believe the plan to be foolproof,” one of the Thieves reported.

Vast Lushness sighed in relief. With her final shred of doubt dispelled, she faced Blue Ease, “Seems like they can be trusted.”

Blue Ease nodded his head, “I got someone to appraise their equipment. They’re definitely topnotch even when compared to our guild. They won’t have any issues in terms of strength.”

“Let’s try to recruit them into our guild once this matter is settled,” Vast Lushness said.

“Yeah. We’ll discuss this with the guild leader once he’s out,” Blue Ease agreed. Guild Leader Silver Moon was still sitting in jail at the moment. There were still four hours left until his release.

“That dimwit,” Vast Lushness’ eyes reflected rare tenderness when Silver Moon was mentioned.

“I’ll go distribute our men,” Blue Ease began to calculate, “We currently have three hundred forty-six members online. Let’s designate thirty members into each of the nine locations mentioned before. As for the guarding of the tenth location, Youye Valley, we’ll be sending all our remaining men there since the valley entrance is rather large.”

Vast Lushness nodded her head, “Don’t forget to assign Priests to each of the locations. That’s very important.”

“Of course,” Blue Ease affirmed.

Young Master Han and the rest were already several hundred meters away from Youye Valley. Seeing as this was their first time here, they naturally did not know where to grind levels.

“Are there still Thieves following us?” Royal God Call asked on the mercenary channel.

“I don’t know. If only Miles is here,” Sword Demon vividly

recalled Gu Fei's ability to detect a Thief on Stealth. That event could even be said to be etched deep on his heart.

"What? What?" Gu Fei immediately called out on the mercenary channel. He had seen their exchanges on the channel, yet he did not butt in. This was because he had no idea what they were talking about. So when he saw his name being mentioned, he immediately asked after himself.

"It's nothing. We're setting up a plan for you to leave Youye Valley without anyone bothering you," Young Master Han said calmly.

"What's going on? How did you guys know I'm in Youye Valley?" Gu Fei was puzzled, "Are you guys in Yueye City?"

"That's right. In fact, we're even trying to resolve your current predicament," Young Master Han said.

"Oh, what's the plan?" Gu Fei asked.

"We're removing the firewood from under the pot," Young Master Han replied.

"What does that mean?" Gu Fei asked for clarification.

"The people troubling you are mostly from Past Deeds. Your matter will be resolved if we eliminate that guild, right?" Young Master Han asked rhetorically, making everything sound very easy.

"Your boldness is truly admirable! I'll wait for your victory announcement, then!" Gu Fei remarked.

"How are we doing this?" Royal God Call asked.

"Let's find somewhere to discuss this matter with ease first, preferably a private place and not a rowdy place like a tavern," Young Master Han answered.

"I know someone. You guys can look for her and she can provide you such a place," Gu Fei said, adding "Her name's Will-low."

“Alright. Let’s split up. Sword Demon, lose our tail and find this Will-low person. And then, proceed onto the next step of the plan,” Young Master Han said.

The five split up. Sword Demon activated his level 30 skill, Fleetfoot, and sprinted away. There was no way that a Thief on Stealth could catch up to a Thief on Fleetfoot.

Gu Fei promptly added Will-low as a friend, “It’s me.”

Level 31, Mage. Will-low immediately knew who the player was upon reading the message.

“Ah, it’s you! I was just about to look for you... And by the way, don’t leave Youye Valley for now. There’s a group of five men from Yunduan City hunting you. They’re working together with Vast Lushness. There’s no one outside right now, but I think they’ve set up a trap for you. I was going to eavesdrop, but a lot of people were there then. I couldn’t get near them,” Will-low anxiously narrated the situation to Gu Fei.

Gu Fei could already guess who those “five men from Yunduan City” were. Laughing lightly, he said, “Don’t worry. I’ve friends on their way to assist me as well. They’d like to borrow your house to discuss the matter. Is that okay with you?”

“Of course, it’s fine!” Will-low affirmed.

“Alright! A Thief called Sword Demon will contact you soon,” Gu Fei said.

“Sword Demon? THAT Sword Demon of Magic Domain?” Will-low quietly exclaimed in shock.

“Yup, that’s the one. Do you know him?”

“Who would not know such a glorious gamer?! To think I’ll have the chance to meet him...” Will-low gushed.

“Don’t get your hopes too high. Many have felt let down after seeing his appearance,” Gu Fei advised.

“I heard he’s really ugly. He he! That doesn’t matter to me. I’ll head to the house and wait for him,” Will-low said.

Gu Fei followed up on Sword Demon with the relevant information. Sword Demon on Fleetfoot very quickly arrived in Yueye City and got the coordinates to Will-low’s place. But before going there, Sword Demon had to look for someone first.

Outside the entrance of Yueye City’s Assassin Union, Sword Demon walked toward a Thief who was busy looking all around him.

“Dusky Cloud? Hi, I’m Sword Demon,” Sword Demon extended his right hand.

Dusky Cloud was stunned. He immediately recognized Sword Demon as one of the five people that had previously stopped him from killing off Vast Lushness back in Youye Valley. Dusky Cloud naturally would not think highly of Sword Demon after an incident like that, so he ignored the proffered hand and furrowed his brows, “Why’re you looking for me?”

“My friends and I have a large-scale plan in motion, which we think you’ll be very interested in taking part,” Sword Demon replied.

“Oh? What’s that?” Dusky Cloud asked, slightly taken aback.

“Let’s go somewhere private first, and then we’ll talk about this. Follow me,” Sword Demon led the way.

“How did you know I’m called Dusky Cloud?” Dusky Cloud asked curiously, as he walked alongside Sword Demon.

“Heard it from my friend,” Sword Demon answered.

“How’s that possible?” Dusky Cloud was perplexed.

“I have yet to hear a second Thief owning Zephyr’s Whisper,” Sword Demon explained.

Previously, Dusky Cloud had failed to kill Vast Lushness with

Backstab in Youye Valley. After Young Master Han saved his life, he entered Stealth mode in an unusually fast rate. Upon seeing this, the expert Sword Demon immediately deduced that Dusky Cloud had activated the Vanish skill, which could forcibly activate Stealth mode for Thieves.

Everyone saw that Dusky Cloud had not taken out anything resembling a skill scroll, leading them to recall Zephyr's Whisper, the dagger owned by No Smile that possessed the same skill.

Although they could not be certain if it was the same dagger owned by No Smile, a possibility existed nonetheless. For No Smile to consign his best equipment to another person, it would definitely have to be a trustworthy friend. It was not actually a hard task to find that out, as all they needed to do was consult July of Amethyst Rebirth. After all, she used to be someone close to No Smile, so she would of course know who No Smile's best friend was.

Young Master Han easily found out the Thief's name as Dusky Cloud through Luo Luo. Following this, Sword Demon promptly added him as a friend. When Dusky Cloud claimed to be from Yueye City, the gang pieced the puzzle together.

Actually, they had done something unnecessary. If they simply asked Gu Fei whether a friend of No Smile was living in Yueye City or not, he would be able to tell them the answer. Unfortunately, none of them had considered the possibility of Gu Fei encountering Dusky Cloud in the city.

Whatever the case might be, they did find the person that they were looking for.

The two arrived at Will-low's house after a short walk. Sword Demon checked the coordinates once more before sending a message to her.

Will-low readily opened the door and invited the two in.

“You’re that...” Will-low was shocked when she saw Sword Demon, obviously recognizing him as one of the five men outside of Youye Valley. At this moment, she could not understand the situation. Recalling that this was a request from Gu Fei, Will-low decided to have faith in his judgment.

“Nobody can eavesdrop inside here. Thieves nowadays are far too daring. Each of them likes to eavesdrop on others, knowing that there isn’t a skill that can detect Stealth yet,” Sword Demon criticized, appearing as if he was not guilty of such impolite actions. Dusky Cloud and Will-low felt somewhat ashamed of themselves, as they had done precisely that back in Youye Valley.

Dusky Cloud lightly coughed twice to reduce the awkwardness in the air, “Brother Sword Demon wants to discuss something with me, right? Is it related to that plan you mentioned before?”

Sword Demon nodded his head, “It’s a plan to eradicate Past Deeds. I think you’ll be interested in it,” Sword Demon and the gang were old slicks when it came to playing games, so they could tell that Vast Lushness was a top brass of Past Deeds. Dusky Cloud’s willingness to risk himself being hunted endlessly by Past Deeds for his attempted assassination on Vast Lushness showed how deep his loathing toward her. Hence, they decided to see if they could borrow his strength for this plan.

“Tell me more of this plan,” Dusky Cloud was a veteran player who had been through a lot as well. Naturally, he would not readily agree to a plan he had no idea of. Only a noob player would get excited just from being invited to take part in a scheme.

“How big is the Past Deeds Guild?” Sword Demon asked.

“It’s a level-four guild with five hundred members. About three to four hundred members get online daily,” Dusky Cloud looked over at Will-low as he said this, seemingly asking for the validation of his information.

Will-low confidently nodded her head, “That’s about right.”

Past Deeds was strong indeed. Traversing Four Seas, Yunduan City's largest guild, was slightly inferior to it, being only at level 3 with three hundred members.

"I heard Past Deeds has a poor reputation around here. Many players must be holding a grudge against that guild," Sword Demon remarked.

"That's true," Dusky Cloud affirmed.

"Is there any way to mobilize the public?" Sword Demon probed.

"Mobilize? Against Past Deeds?" Dusky Cloud laughed bitterly for a moment, "Are you thinking of using the power of the masses to overwhelm Past Deeds? I don't know what you're smoking, but most players here are afraid to move against them. They may cuss like bad*ss m*th*rf*ck*rs, but that's it. They're all talk and no action. F*ck! In the past, we made arrangements with a few other guilds in Yueye City to sweep a grinding map from Past Deeds together, yet only a handful of them showed up when it was time to act. All across the mountains and terrains of that level 30 to 40 grinding map were filled with Past Deeds' players! What sort of sweep could we achieve with just that pitiful amount of people? Nowadays, almost all the experts in Yueye City are members of Past Deeds. If we don't have at least twice or thrice their number, it's impossible to achieve anything against Past Deeds. You're looking down on the intelligence of Yueye City's player base if that's your plan. Do you really think that we haven't thought of plans exploiting our superiority in number?"

Sword Demon smiled, "That means you can contact other guilds, right?"

Dusky Cloud nodded his head once more, "Of course, I do. After all, my current goal is to eradicate Past Deeds. If the others and I allow them to continue their arrogance, how will we hang our hats up here? I'm actually depressed right now. Today, Vast Lushness managed to have a good look at me. Once the matter with Fugitive

27149 passes, I will most likely be the Past Deeds' next target! If only I have five hundred experts to lead against Past Deeds and annihilate them once and for all!"

"Can you find five hundred men?"

"I mean five hundred EXPERTS! Haven't I mentioned how the players of Past Deeds can gather in a grinding map all at once? A wrong move on our part may invite a concentrated attack from them. We must at least have the ability to destroy everyone all at once to deal with them," Dusky Cloud clarified.

"And yet, an opportunity happens to be present at the moment," Sword Demon laughed enigmatically.

"What opportunity?" Dusky Cloud asked.

"Can you tell your buddies to come over here? I want to explain the situation to all of you in one go. I can guarantee that it'll be the most enticing offer," Sword Demon said.

"Are you for real?" Dusky Cloud had his doubts.

"I'm not one for jokes," Sword Demon answered seriously.

"Alright, wait for a bit!" Dusky Cloud felt assured. He immediately sent a message to his friends along this line, "You m*th*rf*ck*rs! Get your sss over here!"

In no time at all, Will-low's house was filled with more people. Each of them had a look of suspicion on their faces. Dusky Cloud hurriedly addressed them, "Everyone, settle down first. We're still missing some people." The crowd began to settle down as they waited for others to arrive. Not long after, nine more players filed into the house.

"Ahem!" Dusky Cloud cleared his throat to begin, "Everyone, this player here is Sword Demon. I'm sure you guys are familiar with his IGN."

Sword Demon was a legendary figure in the online gaming

community. All these experienced gamers inside the room had obviously heard of him, so they immediately professed their admiration for him. Once this was over, they collectively asked Dusky Cloud, “Why did you call for us?”

“Silence, you b*st*rds!” Dusky Cloud cursed, “Brother Sword Demon is proposing a plan to annihilate Past Deeds, so I called you guys over to hear him out.”

“Annihilate Past Deeds? F*ck me! Brother Sword Demon, how large is the reinforcement you brought along?” someone shouted.

“Heard you’re from Yunduan City! Traveling this far just to assault Yueye City’s Past Deeds... No wonder everyone praises you. This brother here is thoroughly impressed!” another person exclaimed.

“F*ck, yes! There’s finally hope. We’ve managed to survive these trying times!”

After Dusky Cloud’s buddies expressed their opinions, Sword Demon laughed politely and said slowly, “We don’t have many people. There’re only six of us.”

All the players inside the room were stunned, exchanging looks with one another. Just as someone opened his mouth to speak, Dusky Cloud interjected, “You m*th*rf*ck*rs better shut your traps and let Sword Demon finish speaking.”

In the end, just one person mumbled, “In the end, it’s still the same case of asking us to risk our lives. If this ploy falls through, we’ll definitely suffer the wrath of Past Deeds!”

Before Sword Demon could respond, Dusky Cloud already scolded, “Celestial Pig, you m*th*rf*ck*r. What even is your sh*tty guild? You’ve got about thirty plus b*st*rds in it, and half of them are your family and relatives’ level 10 accounts. They don’t even come online anymore. Why’re you nagging so much when you can just gather your family again to nominate a new guild?!”

Celestial Pig laughed brightly, “A circle, though small, is still complete! It wasn’t easy for me to set up my guild! For the sake of meeting the required number to nominate it, my grandfather had to enter this VR game and struggle through the confusion of getting to level 10, nearly causing him to have cerebral hemorrhage. I won’t even dare to bother him again!”

Dusky Cloud continued badmouthing him, “Shouldn’t you be putting effort into this matter, then? You’re barely scraping by these days. Didn’t you get cuss out like dog poop by that b*st*rd Blue Ease at the Auction House yesterday? Looking at your cowardly mug, you still dare to mention your grandfather? To think you still have the face to look your grandfather in the eyes after he risked his life with that cerebral hemorrhage just to help you nominate a guild. Do you even have dignity? Grow a pair, will you? Just this one—”

“Alright, you m*th*rf*ck*ng b*st*rd! This bad*ss m*th*rf*ck*r will join you! Happy?” Celestial Pig nearly cried tears of blood.

“That’s more like it,” Dusky Cloud affirmed. He then said to Sword Demon, “Brother Sword Demon, don’t worry a thing. Even though these friends of mine are uncultured—”

“M*th*rf*ck*r, you’re the one who’s uncultured. Your whole family is uncultured!”

“Old Cloud, you’re a real m*th*rf*ck*r yourself! Stop acting like you’re a saint.”

The crowd eventually settled down after five minutes. Dusky Cloud resumed, “See how uncultured these cowards are? Every other word they say is punctuated by expletives—But!” Just as everyone was about to start cursing once more, Dusky Cloud hurriedly interjected, “Besides Celestial Pig, who has no backbone, the others are hot-blooded top players through and through. If you truly have a workable plan, give it to us. We promise not to wrinkle our brows and to carry out every task seriously!”

“Yeah, that’s much better, Old Cloud,” Everyone was satisfied, except for Celestial Pig who continued to howl, “You m*th*r*f*ck*ng b*st*rd! G*d*mn, you s*n*f*b*tch!”

“Okay!” Sword Demon, who had been spurred by everyone’s expletive-laden verbal exchange, eagerly said, “With the help of such a band of brothers like you all, I’m sure that there won’t be any issue. Past Deeds’ strength lies in the high levels of its players and the large manpower it can mobilize. Furthermore, that guild’s players usually move in a large group or stay in the same grinding map together, making it difficult for others to attack them. Now, through our machination, all the online members of Past Deeds will split up into ten different locations.”

Everybody’s eyes widened. Being experienced players, they naturally knew what this meant.

“Do you have a map of Yueye City?” Sword Demon asked.

“I have one right here,” Will-low immediately took out a map and handed it over.

“Ah! There’s a flower among us. Why didn’t I notice before?” The lecherous wolves in the pack surfaced. “Hey, babe! What’s your name?” each of them seemed to say the same line.

“You f*ck*rs, this is her house! Settle the f*ck down and finish listening to what Boss Sword Demon has to say!” Dusky Cloud hollered at the unruly bunch.

Sword Demon swept his gaze over the map on the table and extended a finger to point out the ten locations on it one after another, “When the time comes, the Past Deeds’ players will split into ten groups. Each of the nine groups will man the entrance of the underground prison, Bounty Assignment Hall, and the seven designated log-off points. The last group will stay outside Youye Valley’s entrance.”

When people in the room heard this, they immediately

understood what Past Deeds' members were trying to do.

“They really plan to hunt down Fugitive 27149! They're truly ruthless, not even giving him the chance to log off or turn himself in!” Dusky Cloud commented. The matter of Gu Fei hiding in Youye Valley's level 50 grinding map had long spread throughout Yueye City.

Sword Demon continued, “Past Deeds will move into position once 27149 leaves Youye Valley. You mentioned before that their online count is always somewhere around three hundred to four hundred. Let's assume that they have four hundred members right now. Youye Valley will need more people since the entrance is rather wide, which means that the nine locations in the city will have about thirty to forty players each. If we have five hundred men with us—uh, we do have five hundred players on our side, right?” Sword Demon asked the crowd.

The people started counting with their fingers, coming up with a final headcount after exchanging a few words with one another, “There should be over six hundred players, but some of them aren't online right now. If we exclude the low-level and poorly geared players, there should be around four hundred men.”

Sword Demon nodded his head in acknowledgement, “Four hundred men. If these four hundred men are split into five groups, each group will have eighty persons. Against each of Past Deeds' groups of thirty to forty players, we obviously have the advantage in number. We should be able to eliminate five of their groups without taking too long. But we shouldn't stop just yet when that happens. The players on our side should continue to charge toward the nearest target, eliminating the members of the nine groups of Past Deeds in the shortest time possible. Past Deeds will suffer a huge loss if a majority of its members uniformly drop a level.”

Once they started discussing the serious matter at hand, the group of men no longer crazily cursed one another. Each of them now had a solemn expression on their faces as they quietly listened

to Sword Demon's battle plan. After he was done speaking, none revealed immediate excitement.

A few of them were deep in their thoughts. Suddenly, someone said, "If that's the case, dropping the Past Deeds' members by one level will just leave us in a stalemate. If we include Past Deeds' reserve members in Youye Valley and their members who are still offline into the equation, the losses we will incur from this battle are actually greater. We're still far off from toppling Past Deeds at that rate."

All nodded their heads in agreement.

These people were rather calm. Sword Demon smiled, "Of course, merely sweeping through the nine groups once isn't the end. There're many fine details we can still exploit."

"Please continue, Brother Sword Demon," everyone listened intently.

"After the Past Deeds' players are killed, they'll revive at their respective job classes' spawn points. This is the first detail that we can exploit. The battle will be conducted in front of the spawn points. In other words, dead players will revive at where they are affiliated. Take the battle occurring at the Thieves' spawn point for example. The quickest enemy reinforcement to arrive at the clashing in front of the Thieves' Union will probably be the Thieves that have been killed at any of the PvP fields. Currently, players are in the early stages of Parallel World. How well the different job classes will fare against one another is fairly obvious, considering that everyone is mostly at level 30 without much difference in skills. So the players who will attack the Thieves' Union should mainly consist of Warriors, as this job class has the greatest advantage against Thieves," Sword Demon elaborated.

Everyone immediately understood. They began to analyze everything thoroughly according to Sword Demon's speech.

"I suppose Archers should be the main force in the Mage

Academy?”

“Mages should be the main aggressors in the Warrior Encampment!”

“The Archer Range should be assaulted by Thieves!”

“There’re still three other job classes!”

Sword Demon continued to explain, “Warriors, Mages, Thieves, and Archers are the four main job classes with noticeable vulnerability to specific job classes. Out of the five groups we’re currently forming, four should have each of these four job classes as their main force. After using our numerical superiority of eighty players in each group to quickly take down the different opposing groups consisting of thirty to forty Past Deeds’ members each, we’ll take hold of the different spawn points. We will then leave sixty players, or maybe even just fifty, who possess an advantageous job class to each of the respective spawn points to maintain control over those areas. Exploiting the job classes’ vulnerability, engaging the enemies with a lower number of people that possessed advantageous job classes, and maintaining our dominance of these four specific spawn points of Warriors, Mages, Thieves, and Archers are three aspects that we need to take note of.”

Sword Demon paused for a bit, and then he addressed the crowd once more, “Everyone, take a look at the map. Yueye City’s seven spawn points are located around here. With this street right here as the point of radius, then the Mage Academy is at the one o’clock direction, Knights’ Barracks at three o’clock, Warrior Encampment at four o’clock, Fighters’ Dojo at six o’clock, Priest Academy at seven o’clock, Archer Range at nine o’clock, and Thieves’ Union at eleven o’clock. As for the underground prison, it’s in the city’s northwestern corner and is far from the PvP field. The Bounty Assignment Hall is in the street closest to the Archer Range.

“Our five teams can only conquer five out of all these locations at first, and I believe those enemy groups stationed at the remaining four places will most likely head over to provide support soon after. The locations of each establishment will be the second key detail that we need to take note of.

“According to our plan, we must seize the four spawn points for Warriors, Mages, Thieves, and Archers. Since the Warrior Encampment is situated between the Knights’ Barracks and Fighters’ Dojo, it will probably receive support faster than the other places. To ease the pressure of defending, we have to give up on seizing the Warrior Encampment from the very start. Our first three groups will begin their assaults at three of the aforementioned four spawn points, and the fourth group will need to start their assault by heading to the Knights’ Barracks to destroy the Past Deeds’ thirty odd players positioned there. Only after doing this will the fourth group proceed to seize the Warrior Encampment and defend it. The newly revived Knights in the nearby Knights’ Barracks will probably head over to the Warrior Encampment to assist their comrades there, so our fourth group will need to hold their fort over at Warrior Encampment and avoid distributing their own forces to help with the clashing over at the other spawn points.

“Our fifth group will need to be a team with high maneuverability. They will strike at the Fighters’ Dojo from the get-go! Currently, there aren’t many Fighters in-game since only a limited number of players chose that job class, so there’s no need to defend the Fighters’ Dojo once this group take care of the Past Deeds’ members over there. Once the opponents are killed off over at Fighters’ Dojo, our fifth group will need to head toward the Archer Range. The Priest Academy is along the way, but the Past Deeds’ members stationed in the Priest Academy will have already left to provide support at the battle in front of the Archer Range started by one of our first three groups. Priests essentially don’t have any ability to fight alone, after all. So just leave thirty or forty

players to man the Priest Academy. The remaining members of the fifth group should then continue toward the Archer Range and join up with the group there. Together, they'll obliterate the thirty-man reinforcement coming from the Bounty Assignment Hall, which is situated near the Archer Range. The joined groups will then make their way to the Thieves' Union and continue onward to the underground prison to destroy the last Past Deeds' group in the city," Sword Demon drew a circle with his index finger on the map.

"By this point, five out of the city's seven spawn points will be completed subdued. So it may be possible to pull the necessary manpower from the various groups to control the other two remaining locations. The excess manpower from each group should also prepare for the final battle with the enemy players coming from Youye Valley! Rest assured; our number is certainly more than the final Past Deeds' group. In fact, after we take hold of all these advantages, many observing players may be willing to give us a hand. Past Deeds won't have a chance to recover after this," Sword Demon concluded.

Everyone pored over the map, pointing and discussing quietly. After some time, Dusky Cloud said, "Brother Sword Demon's ploy is truly brilliant."

Sword Demon accepted the compliment gracefully, "Naturally, what I've just described is the most ideal situation. When we're executing the plan, quite a few things outside of our calculations may occur. But as long as we strictly follow our plan, the chances of us emerging victorious are high."

Dusky Cloud nodded his head, "I have a question."

"Speak."

"I actually eavesdropped on the conversation between Vast Lushness and you and four others earlier. Does this mean you five have already planned to deal with Past Deeds from that moment

on?” Dusky Cloud asked.

“That’s correct,” Sword Demon affirmed.

“Why? Why did you come here all the way from Yunduan City just to mess with Past Deeds?”

“We’re doing it for a friend,” Sword Demon said firmly.

“Friend?” Dusky Cloud was momentarily stunned, immediately following up, “Is it Fugitive 27149?”

Sword Demon nodded his head in affirmation.

Sword Demon’s confirmation made Dusky Cloud hesitate, “You do know that No Smile is my friend, right?”

“I do,” Sword Demon nodded his head once more.

Everyone saw Dusky Cloud begin to hesitate. Now, it was Celestial Pig’s turn to curse, “Old Cloud, you m*th*rf*ck*r! Why’re you suddenly so cowardly? We’re all aware that No Smile is your friend whom Fugitive 27149 has dropped by eight levels. But this and that are two separate matters. No Smile might have lost eight levels, but he’s got nothing to do with what we’re about to m*th*rf*ck*ng do to Past Deeds. If you’re a real man, you’ll know how to separate personal from business. If you really want to avenge No Smile, go challenge Fugitive 27149 to a duel! Don’t mix this huge matter with your petty personal issue!”

With that, Celestial Pig stepped forward and looked at Sword Demon, “Big Brother Sword Demon, I’ll take over if this coward backs out. I’ve heard of your character, so I’ll put my faith in you. Count my guild in.”

The house was silent, as no one spoke for a while.

Dusky Cloud looked about and suddenly burst into laughter, “Celestial Pig, you m*th*rf*ck*r! Your sh*tty guild only has a dozen or so players in it if one excludes your kin. Leave this to the professionals and get your *ss to the back of the line!”

Everyone immediately felt relieved. They came over to Dusky Cloud and playfully punched him, throwing a couple of insults for good measure, “You m*th*rf*ck*r, I was almost convinced that you’re about to turn into a coward. It’s a good thing that you didn’t disappoint us!”

“Do it! Let’s all do it!” everyone yelled.

“Do it! Let’s eradicate those b*st*rds of Past Deeds!” Dusky Cloud bellowed the loudest.

Sword Demon finally sighed in relief. He immediately sent a message on the mercenary channel, “Alright. We’ve found a gang of dependable brothers for this. Problem solved!”

Chapter 86 - Attack Commencing

The plan to eradicate Past Deeds began to be implemented methodically. The manpower allocation, grouping, attack route, and field research needed time and preparation.

Dusky Cloud and the gang were old hands at this, so Sword Demon did not need to instruct them himself. The only worrying factor in all this was keeping the plan under wraps. All their efforts would be wasted if Past Deeds caught wind of this. However, Dusky Cloud and his buddies thumped their chests and assured him of their respective guild mates' loyalty.

Meanwhile, the spy that they had sent over to Past Deeds' side kept them updated to the guild's every move. The players of Past Deeds were currently grinding, questing, or generally enjoying themselves, completely oblivious to the trouble headed their way.

After every player taking part in the scheme had been screened under an hour, the representatives of Yueye City's various small guilds gathered in Will-low's house once more to report their numbers.

"Here's what I got in my guild. Seventy-four players made up of 13 Warriors, 11 Mages, 11 Archers, 10 Priests, 14 Thieves, 10 Knights, and 5 Fighters." With Dusky Cloud starting things off, the rest also reported their player compositions. Will-low faithfully recorded the figures by the side. Collating the various guilds' numbers, the final tally was 465 players.

In total, they had 83 Warriors, 76 Mages, 79 Archers, 65 Priests, 80 Thieves, 61 Knights, and 21 Fighters.

Sword Demon felt relieved upon seeing the final breakdown. He had initially been worrying about them not having enough players to form one or two groups out of the planned five, as that would have made enacting the plan to isolate and suppress each of the job classes impossible. Dusky Cloud and the lot were indeed

experienced gamers; their guilds forwent numeric superiority in favor of a balanced job class composition. Hence, except for the guilds' sparse amount of Fighters due to the job class' unpopularity in Parallel World, the rest of the six job classes were comparatively even in numbers.

Actually, the problem about the Fighter job class was not the job class itself but rather its higher degree of motion requirement, which the average players needed time to get used to.

When the game officials added this criterion to the Fighter job class' description, many people conscientiously avoided choosing the job class. Since they could only own one account in Parallel World, they naturally did not want to squander that one chance by owning a difficult-to-handle job class. In fact, hardly any of the current level 30 Fighters in-game could pull off their job class' skills that required them to perform bombastic acrobatic moves.

This caused several Fighters who had been attracted to their job class by its combo attack ability to cry rivers of tears in dismay. They firmly believed that the game officials had overestimated the capability of a real brawler.

“This is the amount of people we have at the moment,” Dusky Cloud said to Sword Demon, “Those that we managed to get online are included in this tally as well.”

Another advantage of having these guild leaders do the preparations for the upcoming fights was their power to persuade the offline members to come online. This move effectively bolstered their forces by another fifty plus people. Meanwhile, the Past Deeds' players were still unaware of the storm brewing; telling their own offline players to come online would be too late and too difficult to achieve when the fighting finally commenced.

The next step to their plan was the forming of groups. While this might seem easy, it actually required a lot of work. After all, it was not ideal to gather the four hundred sixty-five players at once and

divide them accordingly, as it would be too conspicuous to others. The only way to do the dividing clandestinely was to write it down first. If listing down all the four hundred sixty-five players at once was already an insurmountable task, it was hard to imagine just how tedious things would be for the different guild leaders, as they were obliged to jot down the different levels and job classes of their guild members. Celestial Pig, the runt, crassly asked whether listing down the players' equipment was needed or not, causing him to receive a ruthless beating from the guild leaders who were already stressed out. Dusky Cloud whacked him the hardest; he had the most men, so his workload was the greatest.

It took them another hour to accomplish the task of assigning their guild members into six groups – one group higher than their previous estimate. Sword Demon had made the plan with four hundred players in mind, with each group having eighty players. That number was more than enough to eradicate the thirty to forty Past Deeds' groups. With the current four hundred sixty-five players, each of the six groups would have seventy-seven players instead. Although each group was three players less of the originally planned eighty, it was not a big deal at all.

Everyone had gotten more spirited as the plan started to take a definite shape, and the tasks became lighter as a corollary.

Finally, the time to inform the participating players of their group allocation arrived. Nobody yelled these instructions on their guild channels to prevent information leakage, choosing to message each member privately instead.

“Player A, add Player B as a friend. Listen to his/her orders later,” was the only sentence uttered. The guild leaders were thrown into a tizzy, sending a message out singly and fielding the questions from their members. Celestial Pig once more had it the easiest, as he had the least men to inform. Dusky Cloud, in contrast, was still the most pitiable among them, as he had the most members to notify.

“Hang in there, everyone!” Sword Demon encouraged them sympathetically.

Every guild leader was exhausted beyond belief after accomplishing this stage of the plan.

“I think I’m going to throw up,” Dusky Cloud said, “I never knew privately messaging many people is this hard.”

“Are we done with our preparations?” Sword Demon asked.

“Big Boss Sword Demon, please don’t make us confirm everything once more,” someone wailed miserably.

“Only the group leaders have to confirm with each member they’re bringing,” Sword Demon said.

“Stop complaining and just confirm everything once more. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so get your m*th*rf*cking a*s*s into it!” Dusky Cloud declared. He was among the group leaders for this operation. No one else dared to complain anymore after hearing his passionate words, as they all knew very well how much work he had done thus far. Once more, they opened up their friends list and privately messaged each group member according to Will-low’s sorting.

Out of boredom, the players not chosen as group leaders for this operation started to make funny faces at the six leaders busily messaging people. These bored players imagined that they were watching a monkey show right now.

And with this, the final phase of their operation was completed. The players’ expressions inside the room steeled. After all their work, the success of their attack now hinged upon what would happen from here onward. Their fighting spirit was at an all-time high; their lips set in a tight line.

“Okay, get ready!” Sword Demon announced.

All nodded their heads, clasped their comrades’ hands, and patted each other’s back.

“Alright, m*th*rf*ck*rs! Let’s roll out!” Dusky Cloud bellowed. Everyone left Will-low’s house in high spirits.

“Miles, it’s time to depart from Youye Valley,” Sword Demon messaged Gu Fei.

“Oh?” was Gu Fei’s only reaction, as he did not know the particulars of the plan.

“We’re about to take care of Past Deeds once and for all,” Sword Demon explained.

“Directly overwhelming them from the get-go?” Gu Fei asked, as he began to make his way out of Youye Valley, “What’s going on?”

“I’ll explain everything when we head back. Take care!” Sword Demon replied.

“The coordinates moved! 27149’s coordinates changed!” A few players of Past Deeds quickly shouted Gu Fei’s newly updated coordinates on the guild channel.

After receiving this news, Vast Lushness promptly sent a message to Young Master Han, “We’ve seen movement!”

“Roger that,” Young Master Han replied, “You guys should get into position.”

“Alright!” After Vast Lushness sent this reply, she issued orders to her fellow guild members.

Past Deeds’ top brasses had long finished assigning their guild members to man each of the ten locations. Seeing that Gu Fei was on the move, a few of them already made their way toward their respective positions.

Under Vast Lushness’ orders, the rest of Past Deeds’ online members in Yueye City covertly headed toward their assigned locations.

“The team by Youye Valley, don’t make a move right away. Wait until 27149 leaves the map before blocking the entrance. Those

who accidentally cross paths with him, act like everything's okay!" Vast Lushness emphasized.

Gu Fei fought his way out of Youye Valley with Coward's Savior in tow. The spot where the two had stayed and roasted meat previously had a lower respawn rate for monsters. It was only after Gu Fei had dominated the respawn rate of several monsters that he started to have an easier time dealing with the monsters in the valley.

Since Gu Fei never added points toward Intelligence or learned AOE spells before, he currently possessed neither the necessary AOE spells nor a great amount of mana to sustain a long period of grinding at this high respawn rate map. While Gu Fei could contend with the level 50 monsters, it was still not efficient for him to grind levels inside the valley.

Nonetheless, Gu Fei had spent almost seven hours in Youye Valley in relative peace, merely fighting monsters and eating his fill of meat. He was also accompanied by a kung fu aficionado who was more than happy to discuss the martial art with him. Hence, when it was time for him to say goodbye to the valley, Gu Fei actually felt some reluctance inside.

"Are all of you in place?" Vast Lushness asked on the guild channel to confirm the placement status of the Past Deeds' members.

"Archer Range in position."

"We've got the Warrior Encampment surrounded!"

"Thieves' Union is covered as well."

The status of the various groups was being updated with each passing moment on Past Deeds' and on Sword Demon's side. Both sides remained focused. Finally, the sentence "Youye Valley has been blocked off" was sent out.

"Begin the massacre!" Young Master Han said to Vast Lushness.

“Good luck!” Vast Lushness replied, not knowing that Young Master Han’s words had a different intention altogether.

“Begin the massacre!” Sword Demon said to his newly met comrades, which was precisely the real intention of Young Master Han’s command.

The Past Deeds’ players that had been sent to Yueye City’s various spawn points found themselves surrounded by many players. However, this did not bother them. Whenever Past Deeds moved in such a grand scale, many curious onlookers would often gather near them. In fact, their hearts thumped with elation at the sight of these onlookers, thinking of showing off to them.

It was only when the gathered ‘onlookers’ had taken out their weapons and rushed toward them that the Past Deeds’ players realized that something was off.

By the time they realized that something was amiss, half of them had already been annihilated.

Sword Demon had overestimated the number of Past Deeds’ players present. Past Deeds had only managed to rally a maximum of thirty players to each of the nine locations in Yueye City.

Hence, the numerical superiority of the seventy-seven players easily covered the difference in quantity that they had against the Past Deeds’ players.

Right now, different types of battle unfolded in front of every spawn point.

The mass of Warriors in front of the Thieves’ Union clashed noisily, their weapons clanging like thunder, against their opponents.

Outside the Mage Academy, a sudden wave of arrows peppered the Past Deeds’ members from every direction until they could no longer find their bearings.

Cries of anguish reverberated from the mouths of the Past Deeds’

players outside the Archer Range as countless Thieves had suddenly materialized beside them and frenziedly stabbed them with their daggers.

Mages had lifted their right hands outside the Warrior Encampment and countless wheels of flames descended from the sky, engulfing the area in a sea of fire. Since there was an extra group out of the originally planned five groups, the Past Deeds' members situated in the Warrior Encampment had the privilege of being the first target of this extra group.

In the blink of an eye, the Knights' Barracks and Fighters' Dojo were seized, albeit the assault on these spots was not as showy as those on the other spots.

The real battle had just begun after this initial assault. It was still unknown whether everything would proceed as planned or not.

Chapter 87 - Racing against Time

Two minutes. That was how long it took for the different groups of Past Deeds' members to be sent back to their respective spawn points, looking perplexedly at one another. They could not make heads or tails of what had just happened. Regrettably enough, none of them escaped death when Sword Demon and his hordes of players assaulted the six spawn points.

However, the more regrettable fact here was that a sizeable portion of the Past Deeds' players remained wholly flummoxed of the situation. These players bewilderedly walked out of the spawn points and pulled out their guild channel to inquire about what had just happened. But before they could send out a message, they were once again instantly killed and sent back inside to respawn by the Past Deeds Eradication Army that had been lying in wait on both sides of each of the spawn points' entrances.

Sword Demon's idea of preventing the players from aiding one another proved to be a bit excessive; their attack was just too sudden for the enemy groups to react properly. At this same moment, the Past Deeds' guild channel was flooded with the members' crying, hollering, cursing, and pleading. But while there were all sorts of reactions on the guild channel, none of the members knew what had really happened. They were also at an absolute loss on what to do next.

Vast Lushness, Blue Ease, and the other top brasses of Past Deeds had to spend several minutes sorting through the chat logs to identify the main issue. Within these several precious minutes, eight out of the nine Past Deeds' groups stationed inside Yueye City had been wiped out by the Past Deeds Eradication Army.

The only team left untouched was the one manning the underground prison, which was far from the other teams. Sword Demon swiftly arranged a group of sixty players to decimate the thirty players stationed in the underground prison and

subsequently seize that location; the rest of the army was left behind to defend the seized spawn points. Besides the Fighters' Dojo, which they had ignored due to the low count of players belonging to that job class, the other six spawn points were successfully seized by Past Deeds Eradication Army. The spawn points for Warriors, Mages, Thieves, and Archers were easily suppressed by their respective job classes' arch-nemeses. Each group's excess manpower had been gathered as well. These surplus players were now waiting for the Past Deeds' guild members coming from Youye Valley to assist their entrapped brethren.

Meanwhile, the Past Deeds' guild members that had died in the various spawn points did not stay idle. A trickle of the revived players walked out of their respective spawn points, only to get insta-killed in the next minute. Following their pointless deaths, about twenty to thirty extremely incensed Past Deeds' members gathered in one place to counterattack.

What ensued was hardly unexpected; the Past Deeds' smaller number and the job class suppression strategy that was employed on them made their charge a one-way ticket to their deaths – or should it be a two-way ticket, instead? After all, their return trip to the respective spawn points was instantaneous.

Sword Demon had a very satisfied smile on his face right now.

Three levels. The Past Deeds' players stubbornly stormed out of the spawn points, resulting into many of them getting killed for the third time since the start of the surprise attack. This was precisely what Sword Demon wanted: The first assault would drop them by a level; the second assault would drop the disorganized Past Deeds' members aimlessly walking out of the spawn points by another level; finally, the third assault would drop the now wised-up and planning-to-counterattack Past Deeds' players by another level.

The plan advanced very smoothly, causing the now level 27 Past Deeds' players to fearfully remain inside the various spawn points.

Endless cries and curses could be heard coming from each of their mouths. They felt even more resentful by the fact that they still did not know who their assailants were despite getting killed thrice. Everything happened so fast that none of them had managed to get a clear look at any of their assailants' faces.

“How can this be?! What’s going on?!” Vast Lushness incessantly asked Blue Ease, feeling utterly aggrieved.

Blue Ease’s face was deathly pale. His quick mental calculation revealed that the losses they had incurred from the eight teams in Yueye City were devastating, considering that about two hundred players dropped three levels consecutively.

“Did we... get tricked?” Vast Lushness voiced her suspicion.

“You mean by Young Master Han?” Blue Ease responded with a question.

Vast Lushness frantically called Young Master Han. Despite the matter devolving to such a point, Young Master Han still managed to maintain his acting and asked very calmly, “What? I’m busy right now. I’m in the middle of a hunt...” His curt reply left Vast Lushness in a state of indecision.

“If they’re the culprits, how did they recruit so many players? Aren’t they from Yunduan City?” Blue Ease could not make sense of things as well.

“Are they really from Yunduan City?” the two asked the people beside them. Everyone affirmed that they had definitely not seen the five around the city before.

Brother Assist and the three needed not be mentioned, just the pair of Young Master Han and Sword Demon would definitely leave a long-lasting impression to the people they met. Since their members had not recognized any of the five men, it more or less confirmed that the mercenary group was not from Yueye City.

“If they aren’t from this city, then they can’t possibly have this

much power,” was the conclusion that they came up with.

“How’s the current situation?” Vast Lushness asked Blue Ease.

“The eight teams are obliterated. They’re stuck in the spawn points right now; unable to make their way out,” Blue Ease reported.

“Let’s not panic!” Vast Lushness advised, quickly calming herself down from her initial agitation. Several core members began to discuss how to cope with their current predicament through private messaging.

With the six spawn points already under the enemies’ control, only the guild’s Fighters were free to move about. The information from the Thieves’ Union mentioned that about fifty to sixty enemy players were currently blocking the street outside the establishment’s entrance. Only their guild mates in the Thieves’ Union could check the situation through Stealth. As for their people in the other spawn points, they were immediately annihilated once they poked their heads out.

“Fifty to sixty players in each of the six locations would make their number to be around three hundred...” Blue Ease’s expression became more strained by the minute. No more than seventy guild members were guarding Youye Valley with them right now.

“Let’s clear each location one by one. They won’t be able to contend with us with just fifty to sixty players,” someone suggested.

Vast Lushness shook her head, “Our opponents obviously planned this assault thoroughly, so they must have a clear understanding of our current predicament. I’m certain that our team’s strength is within their consideration, too.”

“Does that mean that they’ve got a group of a hundred men waiting to face us?” someone asked.

“I’m afraid that’s very likely....”

“Where in Yueye City did such a powerful guild sprout?” everyone wondered, feeling dumbfounded.

“This whole mess still comes back to those guys!” Blue Ease retorted, “Maybe these players are also from Yunduan City?”

“No point in discussing that right now,” Vast Lushness said, adding, “Have two fast players chase after Fugitive 27149’s coordinates. See if those guys are truly hunting 27149. The rest of you, follow me back to Yueye City. Don’t hurriedly engage the opponents when we meet them. Take cover and hide first. Update the other guild members regarding them. Instruct anyone who has dropped over two levels to go offline immediately. Log on twenty minutes later. If possible, use that time to make our offline members log on, too.”

All nodded their heads. Past Deeds slowly began to initiate their counterattack.

“Many Past Deeds’ players went offline,” Sword Demon and the group leaders received this report.

“Cowards! They’re usually domineering whenever they bullied us in the past. Now that the tables are turned, they’ve become nothing short of cowardly tortoises! Come out and fight with us to the death!” Celestial Pig exclaimed angrily.

Sword Demon laughed as he patted him on the back, “It’s not the time to get overly emotional. The Past Deeds’ players are calmly reacting to us. They’ve logged off in the hope of us easing up the pressure. Brace yourselves, guys. They’re definitely planning a counterattack.”

Celestial Pig nodded his head, “Big Boss Sword Demon, we’ll do as you say.” After the success of the initial assault, they no longer doubted Sword Demon’s plan feasibility and capabilities.

“How long does it take to travel from Youye Valley to Yueye

City?” Sword Demon asked.

“At least twenty minutes for the low-Agility job class,” Dusky Cloud replied.

“With how things currently stand, they won’t dare to split their group any more. There’re twenty minutes left before they arrive. Unfortunately, we’re not sure which route they’re taking. Do we have anyone in that team?” Sword Demon asked.

Dusky Cloud shook his head regretfully, “No. Our spy was assigned to guard the city.”

Sword Demon was stunned, “Where’re they now?”

Dusky Cloud smirked, “It’s not ‘they’; it’s just one brother who acted his role all the way to the end. He died together with the Past Deeds’ members.”

Sword Demon’s expression changed, yet he did not comment. He looked all around him and said, “Have a few Thieves spy on the Past Deeds’ movement outside the city!”

“I’ll bring a few people along!” Dusky Cloud nodded his head in agreement. He chose a few other Thieves and sprinted toward the city gate with them.

Sword Demon became more and more anxious as time passed by. Although the initial assault was a great success, Sword Demon dared not regard their enemies lightly. After all, Past Deeds quieted down a little too quickly.

He had original deduced that the Past Deeds’ reinforcement would head toward the Mage Academy, as it was closest to Youye Valley out of the nine places. Furthermore, Mages were an important firepower when it came to group PvP; rescuing the trapped Mages would be the best option for Past Deeds. However, things might not be that simple, seeing how the Past Deeds had reacted thus far. Would their next move result into him falling into the enemies’ trap?

In the end, we've overlooked some parts in the plan, Sword Demon sighed, I should've sent a Thief on Stealth to spy on the Past Deeds' group in Youye Valley. Just knowing which route they're taking would've made things easier. Right now, he could only hope that Dusky Cloud and the other Thieves rushing outside the city would be able to discover which direction their opponents had headed.

At that moment, Dusky Cloud and the three Thieves arrived outside the north gate leading toward Youye Valley. Dusky Cloud solemnly instructed each Thief before splitting up, "Try to gather as much information as you can even if you get killed!"

The three firmly nodded their heads, "We will, Boss Cloud. Don't worry!"

The four activated Stealth and chose a different direction each. The terrain outside Yueye City's north gate was not complex. Hence, Dusky Cloud was certain that it would be easy to spot a group of over seventy players moving together.

The Thief that had gone to Yueye City's northwestern corner was the first to send a report to Sword Demon. He discovered that the Past Deeds' group situated in the underground prison had already dispersed before their allied group even arrived.

Meanwhile, Dusky Cloud, who was still outside the city, brought good news; he had located the seventy-man team of Past Deeds. Curiously enough, they did not head toward Yueye City but remained where they were originally stationed.

"They must be waiting to join with the underground prison's thirty-man team! Quick! Let's take this opportunity to head out!" Sword Demon swiftly rallied everyone to rush out of Yueye City and meet their opponents halfway for a final showdown.

With the additional thirty men, the opponents would have over a hundred players on their side. All were first-rate players who could overwhelm enemies even with the odds against them. Victory

would be uncertain if Past Deeds was given a chance to form a team of one hundred men.

Chapter 88 - The Ninth Team

The Past Deeds Eradication Army currently had fifty players stationed at each of the five spawn points that they had seized, with another thirty players stationed outside the Priest Academy. These two hundred eighty players were needed to keep up the pressure in the six spawn points. Thus, Sword Demon could not deploy them to another location even if he wanted to.

Without these two hundred eighty players, Sword Demon's group and the sixty-man group assaulting the underground prison could only form a team of about one hundred eighty men at Yueye City's north gate. Conversely speaking, Past Deeds would have somewhere around one hundred players if the team situated in the underground prison could join the team in Youye Valley. Sword Demon did not know how many players were needed for his group to make up for the gap in terms of skills, gear, and other factors with the enemy team. After all, this was the first time he had taken part in such a large-scale fight in Parallel World.

However, there was one point he was aware of: The fewer opponents they needed to face, the better the odds would be for them. Thus, Sword Demon decided to have his group attack the Past Deeds' players first to prevent the enemies from improving their odds of victory.

Unfortunately for Sword Demon's group, a large portion of them had low Agility. The Thieves, Archers, and the other job classes had to match their speed with the Warriors and Priests'.

Every job class counted in such a large-scale PvP, after all. In other MMOs, it was rare for the different job classes to have varied speed. Therefore, the Thieves and Archers in Sword Demon's group fervently wished for their Warriors and Priests to grow an extra leg or two in order to hasten their pace.

Fortunately, Sword Demon and his team did not receive any

news from Dusky Cloud of the enemy group managing to form up, as they marched onward. Dusky Cloud, who was in charge of monitoring the Past Deeds' movement, excitedly told Sword Demon that he could now see the latter's squad from his location of a few hundred meters away.

That's great! Sword Demon thought to himself. He assumed that the Past Deeds' thirty-man team must have taken a detour to not arouse suspicion, increasing the time they needed to form up with the team in Youye Valley.

After a while, Dusky Cloud sent another message, "That's odd. I've been searching for a long time in the team I'm monitoring, yet I can't seem to find that shrew, Vast Lushness. Has anybody seen her?" Dusky Cloud bore a deep grudge against Vast Lushness. Not only did he want to lead his brothers to a new future, he wanted to 'settle' his grudge against her along the way as well.

"I don't see her here, either!" the people holding the fort at the Priest Academy reported.

"G*dd*mn! Where did that shrew go?"

"She's a woman! Maybe she became scared of the upcoming fight, so she retreated under the comfort of her blanket while hugging a pillow?" someone ridiculed. Dusky Cloud was not the only one holding a grudge against Vast Lushness, after all.

Dusky Cloud furrowed his brows. He knew that Vast Lushness was not that simple-minded. Actually, she was very similar to Dusky Cloud and his buddies: hot-blooded, bloodthirsty, and loyal. The only difference between them was that Vast Lushness was a woman, so she did not curse as much as them.

If Dusky Cloud were her, he would fight until his level was reduced to zero. He would never choose to retreat or hide from a fight. Undoubtedly, the like-minded Vast Lushness would be the same.

“Big Boss Sword Demon, it’s very unusual for that shrew to be missing. Something’s not right here,” Dusky Cloud privately messaged Sword Demon.

“What?” When it came to familiarity with the local players’ thought process, Sword Demon could not compare with Dusky Cloud. After all, this was not Sword Demon’s home ground.

“That shrew is not the type to retreat. I’m still waiting to fight with her to death! I think that there’s a scheme in play here, since she’s nowhere to be found,” Dusky Cloud speculated.

“Who are the core members that you can see over there?” Sword Demon asked.

“I only see Vice Guild Leader Blue Ease over here,” Cloud Demon replied.

“Are there few Thieves in that team?” Sword Demon asked, thinking of a possibility.

Dusky Cloud thought of the same thing as well. Was it possible for their opponents to have already finished forming up and only appear few in number because the Thieves had gone on Stealth? However, this did not seem to be the case upon closer inspection, “Nope. All the job classes are present; the Thieves don’t seem to be lacking in number either.”

“Anyway, we’re almost there. Let’s talk about this more after we eliminate that team!” Sword Demon said.

“Alright! ...Hmm? OH, WAIT!” Dusky Cloud suddenly shouted.

“What?” Sword Demon had asked this question when he himself could already see what was happening in real time. On a distant field, seventy odd players of Past Deeds could be seen scattering and rushing from all directions in pairs of twos and threes. They were leaving the should-be battlefield in separate units.

“They’ve dispersed! What’s going on?!” Dusky Cloud hollered.

Past Deeds was already on the losing side with their smaller number, so only by joining together could they have a powerful combat strength. However, the Past Deeds' seventy players still chose to split up right before the huge fight. What were they thinking? Sword Demon and his group only had to form a few strike teams of Thieves and Archers with Agility-based builds and they could easily take care of over half of the dispersing Past Deeds' players! Sword Demon gazed at the heavily geared Warriors and low-Agility Priests running across the plains and could absolutely not understand what Past Deeds was thinking.

"Let's go, Big Boss Sword Demon! We won't lose as long as we take them down one by one!" someone beside Sword Demon suggested when he appeared to be hesitating. This bunch of people could not help but salivate upon seeing the Past Deeds' players filling up the hills and plains before them.

This truly is not the proper time to be hesitating. Sword Demon nodded his head and raised his hand, bellowing, "CHARGE!"

"CHARGE!" everyone roared in unison. At this moment, the Thieves activated Fleetfoot and dove straight toward the scattering enemy players. The Archers sent arrows whooshing through the air as well. These two job classes became the main offensive force of Sword Demon's group right now. From time to time, the Mages would throw out fireballs. As the Warriors and Priests, they mostly provided support from the rear.

Sword Demon bravely took the lead, heading for a player and plunging a knife using Backstab.

Although Dusky Cloud considered the Past Deeds' players to be outstanding individuals, they were still incomparable to Sword Demon. Sword Demon had dug his dagger deeply into his opponent before the latter could even retaliate. And with two stabs under Fatal Blow, he made short work of the player.

"Big Boss Sword Demon is too domineering!" everyone

exclaimed. Sword Demon had just killed off a Warrior, a job class that Thieves were weak against. An average Thief would usually get killed just from attempting to touch a Warrior. Warriors had high HP and defense, so Thieves that specialized in dealing physical damage found it hard to attack them. Equipment that increased the chances of Fatal Blow, like the dagger that Sword Demon possessed, was necessary for a Thief to deal physical damage to a Warrior.

Sword Demon waved at everyone for a bit, before hurtling himself toward another target.

Actually, Sword Demon did not randomly plunge his dagger into the Warrior; he had appraised the target first before coming to a decision to attack him. Nonetheless, it was a rather risky move on his part, since the probability of the Warrior turning around with Cyclone still existed. Although the Cyclone's duration was dependent on a Warrior's amount of Rage, it was still a skill that dealt the highest damage in Parallel World. Hence, any of the low-HP Thieves that received this attack would be insta-killed. Actually, only the absurdly skilled Gu Fei would consider Cyclone as an inflexible and easily defendable in-game skill.

After disposing the Warrior and raising everyone's fighting spirit in corollary, Sword Demon targeted a Mage next.

Although fighting spirit was important in online games, it could not actually do something like tapping into the players' inner potential. The least it could do was roused the players' passion for violence, encouraging them to courageously fight even in the face of death.

The job classes with high Agility on the Past Deeds' side were very fortunate, as their guild's Priests, Warriors, and other job classes with low Agility had a hard time escaping the assault of Sword Demon's group. Meanwhile, the more enemy players Sword Demon disposed of, the harder it was for him to figure out Past Deeds' plan.

As Sword Demon pondering on this, a message came from within Yueye City; a thirty-man team had appeared in the Archer Range.

“F*ck me! What skill is this?!” the players blocking off the Archer Range cried out. Bad news arrived a minute later, “We were wiped out!”

“How is that possible?!” Sword Demon and the rest were flabbergasted. They had placed a fifty-man group at the Archer Range. Even if they could not fend off the thirty players dispatched by Past Deeds, they should at least not be losing so quickly, especially since they had numerical superiority.

With this, they had lost control of one of their spawn points. A majority of the allied players guarding the Archer Range were Thieves, so most of them revived over at the Thieves’ Union. Since the Thieves’ Union was one of the spawn points closest to the Archer Range, a lot of Thieves would go over there to provide reinforcement right now. At this point, the extraordinary thirty-man team that could wipe out a fifty-man team was only a minor concern for Sword Demon.

Sword Demon was more worried about the mere thirty men he had stationed over at the Priest Academy, which was also not far from the Archer Range.

“The Priest Academy’s team, quickly retreat and head toward the Warrior Encampment!” Sword Demon gave this order to their players in Yueye City’s Priest Academy. He then proceeded to gather his group members who were running all over the plains. At this very moment, Sword Demon realized that it would be difficult to quickly assemble the troops chasing after the scattered Past Deeds’ players again. It would definitely take some time!

Is this what they’re after?! Sword Demon’s heart squeezed.

Another report came from within the city at this point: “A lot of Past Deeds’ players that were previously offline have begun to come online!”

“G*dd*mm*t! M*th*rf*ck*rs, move faster! Don’t f*ck*ng kill anymore. We’ve got a big problem back in the city!” Dusky Cloud howled like a wolf out in the open, as he abandoned the group channel.

“We’ve got a problem!” Sword Demon quickly sent a message to Young Master Han, “What’re you guys doing?”

“What’s wrong? I’m drinking!” Young Master Han replied.

“M*th*rf*ck*r!” Sword Demon had obviously been influenced by Dusky Cloud and his buddies. He quickly relayed the issue, “A team of Past Deeds that we had lost track of before appeared and took back the Archer Range in just a minute.”

“That’s impossible. How many people did you leave behind? It only took them a minute?” Young Master Han asked, feeling shocked.

“Fifty men!” Sword Demon said, “We don’t know where they are now!”

“B*llsh*t! Where else could they go after securing the Archer Range?!” Young Master Han retorted.

“Warrior Encampment!” Sword Demon finally got it. The job class’ weakness was not something that only Sword Demon’s side could utilize. Their opponents must have realized Sword Demon’s plan of utilizing the job classes’ weaknesses to suppress the relevant spawn points. Now that their opponents rescued a whole pack of Archers, they would naturally use them to attack the job class that the Archers had the most advantage against. Currently, the fifty-man group defending the Warrior Encampment was mainly consisted of Mages, whose arch-nemesis was the Archer job class.

“Newly respawned Thieves at the Thieves’ Union, swiftly make your way to the Warrior Encampment!” Sword Demon immediately ordered. His heart rejoiced when he recalled that he

had already sent the Priest Academy's defenders over to the Warrior Encampment.

"What's going on?" Dusky Cloud hurriedly asked.

After Sword Demon explained everything, Dusky Cloud quickly reacted, "Fleetfoot! Every f*cking one of you better activate your Fleetfoot!"

"They just dropped a level when they had respawned. Fleetfoot can't be used, anymore," Sword Demon reminded Dusky Cloud.

"M*th*rf*ck*r!" Dusky Cloud cursed, "Where did they get such a bullish team of thirty players? Did they form them slyly?"

Sword Demon did not think so. If they could form the current thirty-man group by gathering from two different locations, it should be possible for them to send more people over. There was no need to just form a thirty-man elite team.

Those thirty men must have been the ones previously manning the underground prison. In any case, Sword Demon and company were more bewildered by that elite team's fighting prowess.

Chapter 89 - The Forgotten Character

“Gather quickly! Faster!” Dusky Cloud bellowed incessantly at everyone beside him. Obviously, their group, which was currently outside the city, had no means to hurry back in time for the upcoming PvP outside the Warrior Encampment.

“We can’t wait any longer!” Sword Demon shouted, “Those with high Agility, return to the city first and support our men by the Warrior Encampment.”

A high-Agility squad composed of Archers and Thieves swiftly made their way toward the city after hearing this. Sword Demon mentally calculated; if the Past Deeds’ thirty-man team from the underground prison did not suffer a casualty when they had rescued their guild members in the Archer Range, there would currently be around sixty to seventy of them attacking the Warrior Encampment. If the reinforcement from several Past Deeds Eradication groups could make it in time there, they would still hold numerical superiority during the fight.

We must make it there in time! Sword Demon resolutely muttered to himself. The distance Past Deeds had to travel from the Archer Range to the Warrior Encampment was quite substantial. Since Past Deeds was at a disadvantage when it came to its number of men, Priests would undoubtedly be crucial to its success. Thus, they would not dare leave their Priests behind in favor of faster movement.

“Priests—f*ck!” Sword Demon realized that he had made a critical mistake: He should not have made the team locking down the Priest Academy’s spawn point retreat so soon. The current Past Deeds’ forces might have been thinking of rescuing their Priests first by heading to the Priest Academy. Even if the thirty-man group Sword Demon had stationed there could not resist the enemies’ bombardment, it would still force the Past Deeds’ players to spend quite some time rescuing their Priests. This would have

bought Sword Demon and the gang ample time to get back to the city. But since he had ordered the thirty-man group to leave the Priest Academy earlier, the Past Deeds' Priests would not have any issue rendezvousing with their main force at the heart of the city.

There's no use crying over split milk now. Anyway, a team with Priests won't be able to advance quickly! Sword Demon held on to that shred of hope in his heart.

It was at this point that they received some good news; a friend of Dusky Cloud saw that a Past Deeds' squad had gathered in the heart of the city. However, this group of players did not go to the Warrior Encampment at four o'clock; instead, they headed northeast.

Northeast was in the one o'clock direction... Mage Academy?

They're heading there, after all! Sword Demon thought to himself. Mages were the strongest AOE damage dealers when it came to team PvP's. It seemed that Past Deeds had taken a big detour to bolster its team's strength first.

When Young Master Han heard this piece of news, he actually reacted with astonishment, "Looks like our opponent's commander isn't simple!"

"?" Sword Demon just typed this to Young Master Han since he was in a hurry to get back to the city.

"It's true that it's faster to attack the Warrior Encampment at four o'clock, which is closer to the Archer Range at nine o'clock. But the Warrior Encampment's defending group is mostly composed of Mages who can deal high AOE damage. Even with the Archers' inherent job class advantage over the Mages, they'll still pay a heavy price for confronting the latter. What's worse, our killed Mages will revive at the Mage Academy's spawn point. By the time they carry their assault to the Mage Academy, our groups will have finished assembling there. Since we're also occupying the Mage Academy, they'll have no Mages left for the upcoming PvP!

With the Past Deeds' manpower disadvantage and lack of Mages, how will they win the group fight? That's why I said that their commander isn't simple. This person's vision isn't limited to what's immediately visible. Occupying the Mage Academy is the key to this guild war!" Young Master Han analyzed, adding, "Half of the Past Deeds' members have dropped three levels. Even if both sides' numbers are equal, either side's strength is now more or less even. Whichever side has more Mages will emerge victorious."

"So how did our fifty players in the Archer Range get wiped out?" Sword Demon reflexively stopped running for a bit as he asked this question.

"I'm still not sure about that. Just quickly get to the Mage Academy and establish a line of defense! Oh, yeah. He first seized the Archer Range for the purpose of using the Archers to lockdown the Mage Academy... F*ck! To plan each step so thoroughly, just who is this person?!" Young Master Han wondered in amazement, "Vast Lushness? I've met her before! While she has a few tricks up her sleeves, she's definitely not in possession of an amazing foresight."

"Alright, I've reached the Mage Academy," Sword Demon sighed in relief. The Mage Academy was in the one o'clock direction, so it was not far from the city's north gate and the Thieves' Union. Sword Demon's group and Dusky Cloud's group actually benefited from the opponents' unexpected plan, as the Mage Academy was close to the city gate that they were currently rushing toward. With this, both groups would have ample time to join up at the Mage Academy and prepare themselves for the upcoming fight.

"Something feels wrong. He must have a way to break your group's defense if he's committing to assaulting the Mage Academy. There must be something we're not aware of," Young Master Han, who was at a tavern, anxiously said.

"We don't have time to consider that now. They've arrived," Sword Demon closed the conversation window. Figures of Past

Deeds began to appear on the street from a distance at an unexpectedly fast pace.

“They’re all Archers?!” Sword Demon felt stunned. He and Dusky Cloud shared a look.

Past Deeds’ hurried over with just a thirty-man team. This team’s every member was an Archer.

“Thieves, activate your Stealth and approach them from behind. Archers, ready your Snipe!” Sword Demon spontaneously commanded. The opposing Archers had dropped a few levels, so they no longer had the Snipe skill. The range that Past Deeds’ team could engage in would definitely be lower compared to Sword Demon’s group. The thirty Archers could not pose a threat to them.

“Just what’re they trying to do?!” Sword Demon was at a loss.

“A group of them must be hiding somewhere! Search the vicinity!” Dusky Cloud made a few Thieves check the surroundings.

The Past Deeds’ Archers did not engage Sword Demon’s group directly. After firing a few arrows, they began to employ guerilla tactic. The opposing Archers focused more on running instead of blocking their attacks; they were clearly avoiding the Thieves from getting anywhere near them.

“Are they trying to buy time?” Sword Demon whispered to himself upon seeing the enemies’ action.

Meanwhile, Broken Cloud, one of the ten leaders of the Past Deeds Eradication Army, was not as nervous as Sword Demon, Dusky Cloud, and the gang. He was in charge of holding the fort in the Knights’ Barracks. Knight, which had balanced overall stats, was currently not seen as a job class that could influence a fight’s outcome. Hence, Broken Cloud wholly assumed that their opponents would not attack the Knights’ Barracks.

It was at this moment of contemplation that he heard several approaching footsteps.

The heavy and uneven footsteps came from the alleyway beside the street. Suddenly, a squad of thirty plus players rushed out of the alleyway and unerringly dove straight into the group that Broken Cloud was leading.

There were no spells, no arrows, no invisible Thieves among the attackers.

It was a team purely consisted of Warriors.

As Broken Cloud was feeling astonished at the sight of them, a bright light suddenly emerged from within the Warriors' mid. It glowed above their heads at first, before spreading in all directions and falling upon everything in sight. The thirty plus players were bathed in this very glow.

The entire opposing team seemed to have received some sort of boost from this glow, as their speed instantly reached a new height.

Broken Cloud had been playing Parallel World for quite a while now, yet he had never seen Warriors attaining such a breakneck speed. The opposing team forcefully endured the arrows and spells that Broken Cloud's group had unleashed and continued to rush toward them. At this moment, the Knights in the Knights' Barracks' spawn point stepped out and applied various blessings to themselves. They then joined the skirmish.

Sword Demon and the gang actually got it wrong. The Past Deeds' team was not just made up of thirty men. When Past Deeds attacked the Archer Range previously, the members stuck inside that spawn point rushed outside to assist in the ensuing fight. Accurately speaking, Past Deeds had a team of over sixty players.

As the two sides clashed, Broken Cloud's group shockingly discovered that this team suffused with bright light was not only

fast on their feet but also had higher damage output and defense; even their HP was more abundant. Indubitably, that layer of light was a sort of skill that could increase a player's every stat. The more frightening fact here was that the skill affected a whole party.

Broken Cloud's group was already a bit weaker compared to these Past Deeds' players. With the enemies' overall strength improved further by that unknown skill, they could not last for a long time. White light repeatedly flashed all over the place as the fifty-man group of Past Deeds Eradication Army instantly got wiped out.

Broken Cloud struggled until the very end. And in that final moment before he collapsed, he saw a sword. This sword, which was held aloft, was at the very heart of the glow, shining golden light upon everything.

Who was the one holding this sword? ...It was Silver Moon, the Past Deeds' guild leader.

The Past Deeds' dignified guild leader had actually become a forgotten character in this whole affair due to Gu Fei capturing and sending him to the underground prison. All forms of communication would be restricted when serving time. Hence, a player could only watch the clock tick and wait inside his or her cell.

Some time ago, Silver Moon finally got through the eight hours of unbearable jail time and could hardly contain himself when he walked out of the underground prison. His exit from the prison, however, was greeted by the sight of his thirty guild mates frantically departing from the location.

Silver Moon promptly stopped them from leaving. Following this, the guild channel that he could access once again stirred frenziedly. This was the exact moment when Sword Demon and the gang had assaulted the Past Deeds' groups in almost all the city's spawn points.

Silver Moon did not know what had happened across the span of eight hours that he was imprisoned. After asking the players beside him, he quickly realized that the situation was caused by a premeditated trap. The enemies split up the members of Past Deeds into ten smaller teams to weaken their might.

The ninth team in the underground prison was obviously a target as well. However, they were momentarily ignored since the place was considerably far or the opponent had not enough manpower.

Silver Moon decided on the spot to lead this ninth team away from the underground prison, yet he opted out of assisting any of his comrades. Instead, they sneaked their way out of the city through the north gate.

Afterward, he contacted Vast Lushness, who was on her way to the city from Youye Valley. They quickly arranged the available players into a team that was mainly composed of Warriors and several Priests.

Silver Moon arranged the players like this to better utilize his weapon's specialty:

[King's Blade

Additional skill: Activates the battlefield aura 'The King's Command'.

Effect: Party members within the area of effect will have all their stats increased by 15%. Consumes 4% of mana every second it remains active.

Skill cool-down time: 10 minutes]

The weapon was a trump card that could greatly help a player attain victory on a battlefield. It was especially useful when it came to team PvP's.

Chapter 90 - Silver Moon's Team

After assembling all the Past Deeds' Knights in the Knights' Barracks, Silver Moon immediately led his team toward the Warrior Encampment. The Warrior Encampment was the most crucial establishment that he was trying to reach, as Warriors would gain the most advantage from the King's Command skill.

Mages were the best at dealing AOE damage;

Thieves could vanish from sight through Stealth;

Knights' buffs were similar to King's Command;

Priests were mainly useful for their healing;

And lastly, Fighters were the best at... being rarely chosen.

Not all the job classes' fortes could be strengthened by King's Command. Only the Warriors, with their abundant HP, high attack, and strong defense – simple soldiers whose strength lay in their stats – could fully exhibit the might of King's Command.

Regrettably, Silver Moon's team of low-Agility Warriors could never outrun the high-Agility team of mostly Thieves and Archers that Sword Demon had sent to assist in defending the Warrior Encampment. A large number of Mages were manning the Warrior Encampment at the moment as well. If Sword Demon's reinforcement arrived and formed a defensive line in front of those Mages, Silver Moon's plan of blitzing the Warrior Encampment with the thirty Warriors under King's Command would be razed to the ground.

This was why Silver Moon had chosen to create a diversion by splitting his forces into two units. The team of Archers headed northeast at the Mage Academy and drew the enemies' attention there; meanwhile, Silver Moon's team of Warriors headed toward the real target, the Warrior Encampment.

The Knights' Barracks was taken along the way, as having more

Knights on their side would also bolster the team's strength and number. In terms of stats, Knight could be considered as the job class closest to matching up the Warrior job class.

As for targeting the Archer Range first... Young Master Han might have overanalyzed things. Silver Moon's plan was simple: His team was mostly composed of Warriors, so he had chosen to target the garrisoned Thieves, which the Warriors had more confidence of subduing due to their advantage against the job class, at the Archer Range.

The squad, which was now composed of Warriors and Knights, made its way south to the Warrior Encampment. Actually, King's Command consumed 4% of Silver Moon's mana every second. This meant that the skill could only last for twenty-five seconds. Fortunately, he had an effective supplement to his team.

Vast Lushness. She was also in possession of a weapon with an additional skill.

[Utopian Magic Staff

Additional skill: offers 5% of a player's mana to replenish a target's mana.]

In addition, the skill did not have a cool-down time. Since Vast Lushness was a Priest with an Intelligence-and Spirit-based build, she had plenty of mana. This meant that her 5% mana could essentially become Silver Moon's 10%, tripling his current mana and extending King's Command by another fifty seconds as a corollary.

Silver Moon had deactivated the skill at the moment. King's Command could only be maintained for seventy-five seconds even with Vast Lushness' mana supplement. Seventy-five seconds was simply not enough for them to reach the Warrior Encampment from the Knights' Barracks. In any case, Silver Moon already resolved to refrain from using King's Command in the fight at the Warrior Encampment. This was to let the skill finish its cool-down

time of ten minutes and be available during the final battle.

Silver Moon's troops had finished all their preparations en route to the Warrior Encampment; the Knights applied Blessing of Health, which regenerated HP every five seconds, on each squad mate.

Dealing with Mages was easy. They only had to survive their initial attacks and engage them into a melee.

Broken Cloud who had been killed by Silver Moon's previous assault respawned over at Warrior Encampment with the others. Currently, they were outside the Warrior Encampment, feeling extremely nervous. This was because the Knights who had respawned after the attack at the Knights' Barracks reported that Silver Moon's team was already on their way to the Warrior Encampment.

"They're here!" Broken Cloud's brows arched downward. The thunderous footfalls he was hearing right now felt even more frightening than before. Silver Moon did not activate King's Command this time, so the Warriors and Knights were not gathered around him. Instead, he divided them into equal pairs, made them take different routes leading to the Warrior Encampment, and sicced them to jointly attack the spawn point.

Broken Cloud looked distraught. He never expected Silver Moon to preserve his skill and to spread his troops out from all directions. This move effectively countered the AOE advantage of the Mages who were currently defending over at the Warrior Encampment. The Mages could hold their ground, provided that they were facing few enemies. Right now, however, they were up against opponents that outnumbered even the defenders of the Warrior Encampment.

Silver Moon's thirty-man team was joined by the forty plus rescued Knights from the Knights' Barracks. Thirty plus Warriors charged out of the Warrior Encampment at this same moment.

Besides these frontline troops, there were also the Priests that Silver Moon had rendezvoused with after breaking through the encirclement at the Archer Range. This was the first battle appearance of the opposing Priests ever since they had gotten out of the Priest Academy. All in all, Silver Moon now possessed an army of at least a hundred men.

“It’s over... We can’t defend against this,” Broken Cloud and his fellow players could already envision their defeat upon seeing the army before them. Nevertheless, the hot-blooded players of the Past Deeds Eradication Army still chose to face the enemies here. Although their defeat was a foregone conclusion, they intended to make Past Deeds pay the price for their deaths.

Past Deeds had amassed quite an army of mostly Warriors, Knights, and Priests in front of the Warrior Encampment. The army’s composition was akin to a meat grinder in a way that it was not dependent on skills but more on brute force, focusing more on their melee capabilities to kill their opponents. Broken Cloud watched Silver Moon and his men assemble in front of the Warrior Encampment from inside the spawn point. This was his second time being the recipient of such a battle formation, yet he still did not know how to deal with it. He could only report the situation’s every detail to Sword Demon and the gang who were currently stuck at the Mage Academy.

Shortly after eliminating the last of the team of Archers at the Mage Academy that Silver Moon had sent to belay them, Sword Demon and the gang received the news that the Knights’ Barracks and the Warrior Encampment had fallen into their enemies’ hands. Sword Demon’s group failed to provide assistance to their comrades at the two spawn points since they had already rallied the rest of their troops at the Mage Academy. This included the squad of Warriors manning the Thieves’ Union. They had summoned the Warriors over to the spawn point for Mages for the purpose of establishing their final defensive line here.

All these meant that the only advantage Sword Demon and the rest now had over the enemies was the Past Deeds' lack of Mages. If they relinquished this spawn point, everything would just revert back from the time before all these happened.

Some of them were currently analyzing the reports Broken Cloud had sent over at the expense of his life.

“Our opponents are mostly Warriors and Knights. There're plenty of Priests as well. This team has high HP and healing capabilities.”

“Silver Moon has an unknown skill, too. Under his skill's light, his teammates' speed, attack, defense, HP, and other stats alarmingly rise. We don't know how far the skill's effect extends; we only know that it can affect over thirty players at once. Although we're unsure of how long its effect lasts, it should only be short. At the very least, Silver Moon couldn't keep it up all the way from the Knights' Barracks to the Warrior Encampment.”

“What a brutish tactic. To tank the attacks and engage in melee.”

“Any job class will have difficulties engaging a Warrior in melee,” Sword Demon sighed.

“Maybe Fighters can deal with them,” Celestial Pig opined. He had always wanted to be a Fighter. However, he ended up not choosing the job class after getting discouraged by the official statement about its high degree of motion requirement. Even now, he could not get the Fighter job class out of his mind.

Everyone only squinted at him. With the severity of the situation, even Dusky Cloud could not be bothered to wail on him.

“Silver Moon is our opponents' figurehead. Get Archers atop the roofs and make them focus their Snipe on Silver Moon once they spot him,” Sword Demon instructed.

All nodded their heads. By the looks of things, this final fight did not seem to be very difficult. The only worrying factor was that

unknown wide-area skill of the Past Deeds' guild leader. This battle's difficulty would drastically diminish with Silver Moon's death.

But is it really that simple? Everyone dared not be overly optimistic.

Whatever the case might be, the Archers still quickly got into position on the buildings' and houses' rooftops around the Mage Academy and silently awaited the Past Deeds' arrival.

The plaza outside the Mage Academy was quiet. If one did not see it himself or herself, no one would suspect that many people were currently hiding in the various corners around this spawn point.

After a short while, however, this silence was broken by a voice, "M*th*rf*ck*ng Celestial Pig, stop quaking in your boots! Is that all there is to you?" The person cursing was none other than Dusky Cloud.

"M*th*rf*ck*r, aren't you shaking as well?" Celestial Pig countered.

"Where am I shaking?"

"Your legs!"

"M*th*rf*ck*r! Since you can see my legs going soft, why aren't you coming over to assist me?" Dusky Cloud berated.

"M*th*rf*ck*r..." Celestial Pig went forward and lent Dusky Cloud a hand, letting him rest his arms across his shoulders.

"Bastard!" "M*th*rf*ck*r!" The two continued to bicker.

Sword Demon laughed at their antics. Undoubtedly, these people were a group of hot-blooded and loyal brothers. From their first assault and the changes they had to make in between to their final showdown with their opponents....

Everything had deviated far from Sword Demon's original plan.

But upon winning their trust, none of them voiced any

complaint.

Even when he erred in predicting the Past Deeds' move or he commanded them wrongly, everyone simply thought of ways to resolve them. Not one of them let out a sigh at his failure.

Countless other players were watching this scene in the plaza. Many of them were as nervous as Dusky Cloud and Celestial Pig, yet none deserted their positions; they remained focused on the battle ahead.

Since we're doing it, then it's only right for us to keep it up till the very end! Sword Demon declared in his heart, feeling a little teary eyed. It had been a long time since he had last felt such strong emotions!

“Coming! They're coming!” the Thieves fired off this message.

Someone suggested sending a squad of Thieves to ambush Past Deeds on their way over, but that idea was quickly vetoed.

Even if the Thieves could attack a meat-shield army made up of Warriors with Backstab, they did not have the strength to take them down – the large number of Priests following behind would at least ensure that. Hence, sending those Thieves would only reduce their own number unnecessarily.

Besides the Archers, the other job classes formed a human wall. “We're banking on their lack of Mages right now!”

This was the unchanging aim of this showdown.

Chapter 91 - The Past Deeds' Meatball

“They’re here!”

“They’re HERE!”

“THEY’RE HERE!”

Their hearts thumped loudly as the Past Deeds’ army drew closer.

The Past Deeds Eradication Army had about three hundred players of different job classes, whereas the Past Deeds’ army had about two hundred players consisted mostly of Warriors, Knights, and Priests.

The side with numerical superiority in this battle was apparent.

However, Past Deeds currently had an army that pushed the concept of ‘meat shield’ to the extreme. With all these meat shields banding together into a group, it was no longer a ‘meat shield’ but a ‘meatball’ instead – a large meatball that could roll over everything on its path.

The Past Deeds’ meatball did not avoid this clash by using alternative routes; instead, the meatball confidently took the widest street leading to the plaza and continued its fear-inducing march onward.

“Archers, ready up!” Dusky Cloud sent this message to every channel, not caring if the players in his friends list were actually Archers or not.

The Past Deeds’ meatball arrived at their army’s vanguard at this moment. The Archers atop the roofs furtively searched for Silver Moon’s figure among the crowd. Sword Demon, Dusky Cloud, and the others who were standing at the very front of the defensive line saw clearly their opponents’ battle formation.

“F*ck!” everyone cursed in unison.

“Silver Moon, you low-life! You’re far too despicable and

shameless!” Dusky Cloud ridiculed loudly.

“You’ve ruined the fight of the century with your cowardice!” Celestial Pig hollered as well.

“What a cheap move! Cheap!”

The meatball marching down the street wore masks.

With their looks hidden, how could anyone locate Silver Moon among this sea of soldiers? It was not just Silver Moon; even differentiating the Knights and the Warriors would be very difficult. After all, in-game Knights that had focused on adding points to Strength would be able to equip heavy armor as well.

Upon reaching a charging distance, the Past Deeds’ meatball suddenly got enveloped by a golden glow. Everyone was bathed in this light that was dispersing about, making the Past Deeds’ meatball strongly resemble a real golden fried meatball.

“The heart of that light. The one holding that glowing sword must be Silver Moon!” Broken Cloud quickly told them upon hearing that the main force was unable to identify Silver Moon among the mass of meat.

However, there was a problem. No in-game rule stated that a weapon must be raised in the air to activate a skill. Players who did so merely wanted to make the skill execution look grander and themselves to appear more dashing to onlookers. Would Silver Moon feel the need to show off with his face covered right now? That sword should have been named as a King’s Private Blade since Silver Moon currently had it hanging down his body. If he could, he would probably stuff it inside his pants just to make it more ludicrous. This was why King’s Command had not descended from above the players’ heads but had slowly enveloped them from below instead. After all, the light was originating from a sword below.

How could they find the golden sword that was hanging down

between Silver Moon's pants among these people clad in golden light?

Nonetheless, the Archers would be wasting their effort of climbing up the rooftops if they gave up with just that. They, therefore, chose to take advantage of the fact that their opponents were lacking long-range attackers by hailing arrows at their midst.

This saying held some truth: "There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes."

In this case, dozens of Archers had dozens of Silver Moon in their eyes.

The arrows rained down upon the Past Deeds, but the meatball turned a blind eye to those.

The squad of Priests tried their best to bestow Heal on the wounded; anyone who got hit by the arrows immediately received Heal. The Archers' deadly arrows on Snipe, which could usually insta-kill the targets, were proven ineffective when faced with this meatball under the combined effects of Silver Moon's King's Command, Knights' Blessing of Health, and Priests' Heal. All the Archers were heartbroken.

The speed boost the King's Command provided the meatball was evident; a cloud of dust rose off the ground and temporarily fogged up the surroundings as the meatball agilely rolled out of the Archers' shooting range.

"M*th*rf*ck*rs! Ready yourselves!" Dusky Cloud bellowed as he twirled his dagger before him.

However, the dagger was so small that Dusky Cloud only looked as if he was flailing an empty hand before thrusting it forward from afar. He very much resembled a person throwing a piece of rock at the moment.

Celestial Pig, at least, looked more ferocious as he raised his huge axe toward the sky, hollering, "EVERYONE, GET READY!"

Everyone roared in unison, yet no one moved.

Their battle strategy had already been set. Thus, the vanguard, made up of the melee job classes, stood their ground firmly to maintain the battle formation and left the attacking to the Mages behind them; the Mages, for their part, raised their staves, casted Descending Wheel of Flames, and waited for the plaza in front of the Mage Academy to be engulfed by the raging inferno.

As for the Past Deeds' Mages still inside the Mage Academy, with how Sword Demon and the rest had already lost three of the spawn points to the enemies, they would naturally did not leave any holes in their defenses and garrisoned enough Archers to restrict the Mages within. Those Mages only had to take a step out of the safe zone and they would be shot to death apathetically.

Both armies finally clashed.

“DESCEND!” dozens of Mages bellowed and countless flame wheels rolled down the sky, setting the entire plaza ablaze.

The Past Deeds' meatball stood upon the scorched earth. The Priests casted Heal nonstop, unmindful of others except for their teammates.

With the light protecting the Past Deeds' army, the meatball managed to maintain its crispy golden sheen and avoided getting barbecued black by the burning land.

Although death loomed before Past Deeds, with a few actually dying, the meatball still braved the hellish fire and continued to press onward. Whenever a row of Past Deeds' vanguard would fall, the subsequent rows would follow up quickly by advancing a few more steps than the previous row. While many might criticize the Past Deeds' tactic, which was heavily reliant on the constant replenishment of its vanguard without caring about their losses, it was undeniable that the meatball was currently unleashing an explosive fighting strength.

Actually, Past Deeds was more than capable of employing such tactic, as its overall strength was already above Sword Demon and the gang's. If Past Deeds managed to engage Sword Demon's group in melee, the Past Deeds Eradication Army would have no way of battling them.

Upon finally penetrating the Past Deeds Eradication Army's first line of defense, some meatball immediately formed an evenly spaced row and growled in unison. Cyclone! It was a neat row of Cyclone!

This was the Past Deeds' elite squad, which was composed of the members that that had accompanied Silver Moon from the start. There were only twenty or so of them, yet none had dropped a level despite participating in several skirmishes before this. They had left their Rage points untouched since the beginning of this guild war by not unleashing Cyclone even once. At present, each of them had a bar full of Rage points. Not only did their joint execution of Cyclone just now propel their bodies to rotate fast, it also extinguished the raging fire in their surroundings. With Past Deeds now engaging the vanguard of Sword Demon's group in a melee, the Past Deeds Eradication Army's Mages could no longer cast Descending Wheel of Flames from behind. After all, Parallel World did not grant players immunity from friendly fire.

The Past Deeds Eradication Army's battle formation was instantly smashed, as none of them could withstand the joint Cyclone attack of the opposing Warriors. Some Warriors on Sword Demon's side activated Cyclone as well, intending to meet Past Deeds' Cyclone with force. However, the qualitative difference between them and the Past Deeds' players, who were currently under the King's Command's buffs, only made them suffer a faster death.

"Retreat! Full retreat!" Sword Demon directed his men to move backward. As long as they increased their distance from their attackers, the Mages would be able to cast spells and salvage the

situation.

However, the Past Deeds' players did not give them the chance to do so. The Warriors promptly deactivated Cyclone upon seeing their opponents retreating and advanced on them step by step. These Warriors immediately closed in the distance with their opponents once more. The Mages of the Past Deeds Eradication Army had no choice but to cancel their casting. The advantage that Sword Demon's group held was instantly demolished by Past Deeds.

"F*ck it! Let's just go all out!" Dusky Cloud yelled. Seeing the opposing Warriors before him deactivating Cyclone, he immediately dashed forward to engage them in a fight. Dusky Cloud willingly gambled his life for this sliver of chance. After all, they were still suppressing Past Deeds in terms of number. The opposing side's formation of about a hundred men lost about two thirds of their members while trying to break through the Past Deeds Eradication Army's first line of defense. As for the Past Deeds Eradication Army, only those shredded by Cyclone just now were sent packing. Hence, their numerical superiority increased further instead of diminishing. Although they could not rely on their Mages any longer, they still had a chance of overcoming Past Deeds.

Could Sword Demon and the bunch win by going all out?

It would be extremely difficult!

That was what Sword Demon felt as he crossed blades with the Warrior in front of him.

Warriors under the King's Command were terrifying, indeed. Sword Demon's attacks were virtually ineffective against the boosted HP and defense of the Warrior he was facing. The situation was made even worse by the fact that behind every Warrior stood a Priest. Some even had two Priests. When the Past Deeds' troops were storming into the fray, their Priests were

closely following behind them. By staying hidden behind their own vanguard, these Priests suffered little damage from the Mages' spells, so their casualties were minimal.

Behind every successful man was a woman.

Behind every successful meat shield was a Priest.

The Thieves, who were inherently weak against the Warrior job class, naturally stood no chance against these Warriors paired with Priests. Sword Demon was of course not an exception to this, as the attacks he dealt to the Warrior were easily healed by one or two Priests. In contrast, Sword Demon would not receive any healing if he was the one to suffer the opponent's two consecutive attacks. Even the level 0 Warrior skill Slam could deal high damage to a low-HP Thief due to the Warrior's buffs. Moreover, there was the level 18 skill Charge. Besides dealing high damage, it could apply the Dizzy effect on the target. None of Past Deeds had performed Charge yet; they were probably wary of the Past Deeds Eradication Army surrounding them if they charged in arbitrarily.

The Past Deeds' Warriors were facing two or three opponents at once. However, under the support of various skills and buffs, they fearlessly dove deeper into their opponents' ranks. The purpose of 'meat shield' was expressed to the extreme by these players – or at least that was the case for these around level 30 players.

On a rooftop by the side of the plaza, a few players were gesticulating at the battlefield before them.

"I think that one is Silver Moon!" One of them pointed at a masked man in the center of the battlefield, "I've been watching him for a while now and he has yet to do anything besides move about. I reckon he has to keep moving for that skill of his to work."

"Shoot him," another said.

"Now? I doubt I can insta-kill him, though," the Archer in the group said hesitantly.

“Maybe attacking him will interrupt the skill?” someone guessed.

“That makes sense!” The Archer promptly nocked an arrow and aimed it at the suspected-to-be-Silver-Moon individual.

The arrow on Snipe whistled through the air and struck the said person. Just as the Archer had expected, the person did not get insta-killed. Additionally, the sudden attack did not elicit surprise from the person. All it made him do was turn his head toward the attack’s origin, as several Priests beside the person hurriedly bestowed Heal on him.

“That’s him, alright! Let’s find a few more Archers and insta-kill him!”

Chapter 92 - Descending Wheel of Flames

The players who were searching for Silver Moon were none other than the three members of Young Master's Elite mercenary group: Royal God Call, Brother Assist, and Young Master Han. War Without Wounds became too impatient upon seeing the mess that the battle had escalated into, so he directly joined the players clashing at the plaza. He, together with Sword Demon and the gang, formed the Past Deeds Eradication Army's first line of defense. Currently, he was ferociously carving through the enemies' ranks alongside the others.

The trio looked all around them once Young Master Han suggested that they gather more Archers.

Although quite a few Archers were still hiding on the rooftops, most of them were out of range of the Past Deeds' meatball that had begun its melee engagement at the plaza. Currently, these Archers were re-adjusting their positions in the hopes of contributing what strength they could to the battle below. In fact, those who were still out of range and could not strike the enemies despite moving to the rooftops' edges decided to just jump down and join the fighting below. Some of the cleverer players had identified Silver Moon among the enemy lines and headed toward the appropriate shooting locations!

Nonetheless, these Archers had yet to reach a vantage point and had their views obstructed by some protruding structures, so they could still not attack Silver Moon who was at the heart of the Past Deeds' battle formation.

"Over here!" Royal God Call shouted toward the running Archers, "You can shoot him from here!"

Some Archers heard Royal God Call's shout and quickly made their way to him.

"Do you guys know Snipe?" Royal God Call asked them this

important question, as it was impossible to shoot the target from his location without Snipe.

Several of the running Archers answered Royal God Call using their middle fingers. They felt that such a question was as good as belittling their abilities.

Royal God Call felt very pleased. He addressed Brother Assist and Young Master Han, “All good.”

In the end, he had celebrated too early. The Archers who were running over suddenly screamed one after another. Following this, a few Thieves appeared from behind their backs. At the same time, the other Archers at the plaza were also ambushed by Thieves on Stealth. All these Archers were quickly disposed of by the Thieves that had completely caught them by surprise.

Before Royal God Call knew it, he was the only alive Archer left. Thieves were now standing on places where the Archers had once stood. Royal God Call was filled with anxiety by this, and he promptly checked his immediate surroundings.

The Thieves of Past Deeds that had respawned in the Thieves' Union finally joined the battle.

This was just the beginning. Since all the spawn points, besides the Mage Academy, were no longer being blocked off, the Past Deeds' members revived themselves and quickly headed to this warzone. The revived players of the Past Deeds Eradication Army also had the same idea, so the two sides inevitably met each other along the way. Currently, the two powerful forces' fight was not limited to this plaza and had already spread all over the city. No matter where one was, be it on a street or in an alleyway, players could be seen clashing with one another.

“Now what?” Royal God Call asked anxiously. He alone would obviously not be enough to kill Silver Moon, judging by the golden meatball's brazen actions. Sword Demon and the lot could not do it as well, as they were under a lot of pressure right now. They were

constantly losing men; their line of defense also kept on retreating as their formation was battered left and right by the enemies' attacks. As a corollary, the fragile Mages behind the line were pushed to the ground by the force of their retreating comrades. The whole battlefield was in utter chaos.

“KILL!” Silver Moon now openly displayed his arrogance. Raising King's Blade high above his men's heads, he let the golden glow envelop the surrounding area. As the Past Deeds' army everywhere entered the AOE of King's Command, they attacked Sword Demon's side with more gusto. Royal God Call was royally enraged. He would gladly exchange his bow for a rocket launcher and blow Silver Moon to smithereens with it if he could.

At this moment, the air around Silver Moon and his meatball became heated. Following this, a visible distortion appeared right above their heads and formed into a flame wheel. This flame wheel spun and quickly descended into their midst.

It's just Descending Wheel of Flames; what's the big deal? the Past Deeds' members under this flame wheel thought to themselves. It would only be daunting if there were more flame wheels. With this train of thought, they all turned their noses up in total disregard of the spell.

But when the fire wheel completed its descent and released its might....

Everyone was flabbergasted.

A huge, empty circle immediately appeared in the center of the Past Deeds' battle formation. This circle's sole occupant was Silver Moon who was standing there with his sword held aloft.

“What happened? Where did they go?” All the Past Deeds' players dumbly looked around them. Even Sword Demon and his comrades felt baffled by what had just happened. Did Silver Moon use a teleportation skill to send his troops elsewhere? Is there even such a skill? That would be too extravagant and unrealistic, right?

Sword Demon and his men looked suspiciously at their rear. Could the meatball have been sent right behind them?

Only Silver Moon knew what had truly transpired....

Too much. The damage from that single flame wheel is too much! Silver Moon only survived the attack due to his high-grade equipment. The King's Blade in his hand, besides the King's Command skill, had a trait that boosted all his stats by 8 points. The accessories he was wearing provided him with high magic resistance, while the equipment he was using afforded him high physical defense. Silver Moon's top-grade equipment from head to toe definitely matched his reputation.

Nonetheless, that Descending Wheel of Flames still managed to reduce his HP to a sliver. He might be alive right now, but he was close to dying.

This Mage's Magic Attack Power is too OP, Silver Moon thought to himself. At this moment, a man squeezed through the opposing side's fragmented formation. He was wearing a pitch-black mage robe and holding a purple colored sword shrouded in black luster.

"27149!" All the Past Deeds' members had taken the 'Bounty Mission' for Gu Fei, so many of them recognized him at a glance.

Gu Fei smiled sheepishly at Sword Demon and the others, "Sorry, I'm late."

"How did you get here?" Sword Demon stared at Gu Fei in astonishment.

"That's a long story. After leaving Youye Valley, I arrived at the plains. There, I threw the few Thieves Past Deeds had sent after me off my track. Afterward, I entered the city through the north gate and encountered The Black Hand mercenary group again. I finally got here after freeing myself from their hassling. Seeing everyone fighting energetically, I couldn't resist joining in. The rest is history—oh, yeah! I learned a new spell on my way here. Look..."

Gu Fei rambled all this in one go, before pointing Moonlit Nightfalls forward, “Descending Wheel of Flames! Descend!”

Sword Demon and company raised their heads. Meanwhile, the players of Past Deeds yelped in surprise and scattered about. In the end... nothing happened!

“Pfft!” everyone exhaled in disappointment. The Past Deeds’ players, on the other hand, turned beet red. They were beating themselves up for easily getting frightened by such a blatant lie. But they quickly got back into formation when Silver Moon bellowed, “Everyone, don’t waste time and quickly charge forward!”

While he survived that attack earlier, his wife, Vast Lushness, did not. Without her mana support, King’s Command could not be maintained much longer. Hence, they had to use this limited time to quickly massacre their enemies.

“KILL!” The Past Deeds’ members hollered, as they followed their guild leader’s orders. Immediately after their voices died down, however, a fiery glow burst into existence above their heads. These players had no time left to dodge the attack by the time they discovered it. The flaming wheel mercilessly descended upon them and left yet another circle with only Silver Moon standing inside.

“That’s the effect I wanted,” Gu Fei smiled slyly; he had conveniently left his long casting time out of his speech earlier. Gu Fei then addressed Silver Moon who was in the middle of the scorched circle, “You’ve got quite a lot of HP!”

Silver Moon was on the brink of death with that initial flame wheel, but the Priests nearby readily healed him back to full HP. When the second flame wheel landed, the Priests did the same thing, which resulted into him being the sole survivor of Gu Fei’s attack once more.

The Priests could not save the others as they only had enough

time to bestow Heal on Silver Moon.

Sword Demon was speechless as well. This was his first time seeing Gu Fei use a spell. Was it not a bit too much to have such devastating damage output? Moreover, Gu Fei mentioned that he had just learned of the spell. Would that not mean that his proficiency of it was only basic? He was holding a sword as well. Did a sword even have Magic Attack Power?

The chaotic fighting had momentarily become still. It was as if someone had pressed the 'pause' button for the game. Everyone gawked at Gu Fei. Whoever he pointed that sword felt his or her heart trembling.

"Is he the one you're looking for to avenge No Smile?" Celestial Pig whispered to Dusky Cloud.

"Uh-huh..." Dusky Cloud unhappily affirmed.

"Don't look at me for help. You're on your own in this," Celestial Pig continued.

"You m*th*rf*ck*r!" Dusky Cloud cursed.

Gu Fei currently looked dashing, as he addressed the Mages that had fallen to the ground on Sword Demon's side, "You guys! Move closer to the enemies so that your spells can hit them! You won't hit anything if you continue to cower behind like that!"

"Everyone, stop dawdling and charge! End him!" While his men stood there in a daze, Silver Moon worriedly watched each second pass by. He had given that last order to deal with Gu Fei to the two Warriors nearby.

The two Warriors hurriedly unleashed Cyclone on Gu Fei.

Unlike others who found Cyclone scary, Gu Fei did not even bat an eye when it was unleashed. He firmly held the sword to his side. Borrowing the Cyclone's force, he flew outward from the spinning pair of men.

Gu Fei was akin to a soldier descending from the heavens the way he had used the Cyclone's inertia to propel himself straight toward Silver Moon. And with a raise of his hand, his sword cut through air like a soaring phoenix.

Silver Moon instantly got pierced. Although he saw Gu Fei flying over, he did not move away. This was because he had assumed that Gu Fei was just thrown toward his direction unintentionally by the Cyclone's force. Silver Moon even thought that Gu Fei would turn into a stream of white light before he hit the ground.

The many players on the plaza thought the same thing as well while watching him fly through the air. Who would have thought that not only had Gu Fei blocked the skill, he had borrowed its spinning motion to launch an attack as well?

Gu Fei alighted on the ground, turned his body around, pointed his sword at Silver Moon, and shouted, "Twin Incineration! Incinerate!"

A blazing light enveloped his blade and instantly set Silver Moon on fire.

Level 18 Mage skill, Twin Incineration. It was an instant-cast skill that burned a target, lowering the HP every second for a total of five seconds.

Silver Moon remained standing despite being hit by that spell. Gu Fei was not surprised by this. After all, Silver Moon only died back in the tavern after Gu Fei's three consecutive slashes had procced Sacred Flames of Baptism's fire attack. Silver Moon was not wielding King's Blade, did not receive Blessing of Health, and was not under King's Command back then. Right now, however, he was completely geared up for the battle.

Moreover, Silver Moon currently had many Priests by his side. Heal was constantly bestowed on him whether his HP was full or not.

Dusky Cloud and the rest finally reacted. Shouting their battle cry, they dashed toward the two in a grand fashion.

Sword Demon entered Stealth mode and he headed toward Silver Moon as well, taking advantage of the opponents' confusion.

Far away, Young Master Han patted Royal God Call's back, "Find an opportunity to send an arrow his way."

Royal God Call nodded his head absentmindedly. He was still wondering about the event a while ago, "How did he manage to deal such an insane amount of damage?"

Chapter 93 - The Real Warrior

Gu Fei's appearance had abruptly turned the tables in the plaza. Him casting Descending Wheel of Flames twice had managed to destroy the formation of the Past Deeds' meatball, and even the Warriors could not resist the explosive inferno he had created despite having high physical defense. After all, only high magic resistance could protect them from Gu Fei's spells. Actually, Silver Moon survived Gu Fei's flame wheels only due to his unusually high magic resistance.

Gu Fei promptly checked his PK value. He felt like crying when he saw that it had risen up to 28 points. This practically wasted his effort of camping out in Youye Valley for a few hours. At this rate, when would he become a free man? Gu Fei felt even more aggravated by his current predicament upon remembering what would happen once he reached 30 PK points: NPCs would launch a manhunt for him. NPCs with combat job classes could be found anywhere in the city. Even this Mage Academy he was currently at had two NPC guards standing right by its entrance. How scary was the power of NPCs? No one knew at the moment, and Gu Fei did not wish to find out himself.

With this thought in mind, Gu Fei resolved to keep his PK value below 30 points and designated Silver Moon as his last kill.

The sword came and went. Spells and quite a few kung fu techniques arrived and departed as well. Nonetheless, Silver Moon still stood steadfast. This feat was not because of Silver Moon having abundant HP, but because of the nearby Past Deeds' Priests incessantly bestowing Heal on him. Every stab of Gu Fei resulted into Silver Moon receiving Heal three or four times. The game officials had regrettably not taken 'over-healing' into consideration. Otherwise, Silver Moon would have long exploded from the excessive amount of healing he had received from his Priests.

After a few more rounds of fighting and healing, a momentous chance appeared: Silver Moon's mana depleted, which resulted into the effect of King's Command ending.

The golden glow disappeared and the Past Deeds' army returned to normal. Dusky Cloud and the gang cheered for Gu Fei, not knowing that the cancellation of the skill was a result of Silver Moon's mana depleting and not due to Gu Fei keeping Silver Moon occupied.

The Past Deeds' Warriors failed to readjust themselves to the sudden loss of buffs and continued to fight fiercely with the other side as if they still had boosted stats. For two reasons, these Warriors' HP visibly dropped under Dusky Cloud and his gang's assault:

First, they were no longer receiving buffs from King's Command.

Second, most of the Past Deeds' Priests were dead. As for the remaining Priests, they solely focused on healing Silver Moon.

In no time at all, Dusky Cloud and the others crushed these Warriors brutally. They then rushed toward the leftover Priests while conveniently killing the Knights they encountered along the way. In the twinkling of an eye, the smaller army of Past Deeds was mostly killed off.

Silver Moon watched with mortified eyes as all the subordinates, including the Priests, around him were annihilated. Knight was a job class that had low combat capabilities on its own. Moreover, his depleted mana prevented him from boosting his own stats. Without his subordinates and Priests' support, he could only watch his HP visibly get reduced by Gu Fei. Presently, Silver Moon was wholly relying on his high defense and the high damage output of King's Blade to forcefully clash with Gu Fei. And yet, he had one glaring problem: He could not land a hit on Gu Fei!

At this moment, Sword Demon, who had already crept behind Silver Moon, used Backstab without hesitation. Most of the players

had exhausted their strength after fighting for this long; in contrast, Sword Demon could still activate Backstab at this decisive moment. Having the foresight to reserve enough points for the activation of that skill, Sword Demon truly deserved his reputation as a top gaming expert.

In a distance, Royal God Call seemed to take Sword Demon's reappearance as a form of signal. Pulling back his bowstring, he fired off an arrow on Snipe that sailed through the air and lodged itself deep into Silver Moon. Gu Fei thrust his sword into Silver Moon at this time as well. As a corollary, their combined attacks turned Silver Moon into a beam of white light.

Gu Fei promptly pulled out his stats window and saw that he had a freshly updated PK value of 29 points. He instantly felt tears well up. He should have scored his hit earlier. That way, the final PK point for killing Silver Moon would be counted on Royal God Call's head.

While Silver Moon's death signified the end of war in Gu Fei's eyes, Dusky Cloud and the rest did not share the same sentiment. With their arms raised in the air, they thundered, "BEAT THEM WHILE THEY'RE DOWN!" They divided everyone into groups and sent them to every spawn point within the city to continue the massacre there.

Indeed, this war was far from over. Dusky Cloud's group only attained victory in the Mage Academy's battle. This clash between Past Deeds and the Past Deeds Eradication Army would obviously escalate into a protracted PvP. This was but a game, after all. Ending a war here was difficult when their lives were unending. This war now depended on the mental capacity of either side. Whoever had a more indomitable fighting spirit would emerge victorious.

Today's grand battle with Past Deeds had one obvious effect: It pulled Past Deeds closer to Dusky Cloud and his comrades' level. With the gap reduced, Past Deeds could no longer be as tyrannical

as before.

However, Dusky Cloud and company were still far from truly eradicating Past Deeds. Upon seeing Past Deeds Guild Leader Silver Moon's insane battle support skill, the likelihood of players joining his guild might be even higher than before.

Sword Demon looked on these players running off in every direction while exuding palpable killing intent with apathy. Having accomplished his goal, what happened from here onward would be left for Dusky Cloud and his comrades to deal with!

As Sword Demon thought of this, he noticed Gu Fei hiking up his robe and heading toward a direction.

"Where're you going?" Sword Demon hurriedly chased after him.

"Off to erase my PK value," Gu Fei's eyes were brimming with tears.

Sword Demon recalled Gu Fei's majestic casting of Descending Wheel of Flames twice and patted the latter's shoulder consolingly, "Take care."

Gu Fei bade him goodbye and left. He also did not care about the massacre happening all around him.

After assigning all the manpower, Dusky Cloud approached Sword Demon, "Your bro is too OP."

Sword Demon nodded his head.

"I owe him a huge favor. If he hadn't shown up just then, we would've all been goners," Dusky Cloud said.

Sword Demon silently agreed.

"Where is he off to?" Dusky Cloud asked curiously, as he stared at Gu Fei's receding back.

"Off to erase his PK value," Sword Demon answered.

Dusky Cloud recalled the two flame wheels from before and was taken aback, “His PK value must be at 20 by now, yeah?” Just as he finished speaking, he remembered that he had picked up the ‘Bounty Mission’ for 27149. He opened his mission tab and looked: 29 PK points. His jaw dropped from shock. One more point and NPCs would hunt him down. If a player accumulated 30 PK points, his or her capture would result into a drop of five levels besides being imprisoned. It was an extremely harsh penalty to bear. That guy’s really brave, Dusky Cloud thought to himself.

Young Master Han, Royal God Call, and Brother Assist climbed down the rooftop. They could not see even a shadow of Gu Fei once they looked around the plaza, so they asked Sword Demon, “Where’s Miles?”

“Off to erase his PK value,” Sword Demon got annoyed at repeating this answer.

Young Master Han swept his gaze to Sword Demon and Dusky Cloud, “If Miles hadn’t appeared just then, you guys would’ve been obliterated.”

The two remained mum.

“Stupid! Why didn’t your Mages attack the enemies that had closed in on you guys? They should’ve killed them all, even if it meant sacrificing your men! Their side surely would’ve greater losses! You only had to deal with those arrogant Warriors in front —”

Young Master Han’s words were cut short by Dusky Cloud suddenly darting to him and grabbing his collar. He was unable to dodge Dusky Cloud’s move since Thieves had higher Agility than Priests. Royal God Call, Sword Demon, and the rest could only gape at this situation. However, Dusky Cloud did not appear to be intending to attack Young Master Han. His move seemed to have been fueled by anger. He forcefully stopped himself from killing Young Master Han on the grounds that the latter was connected to

Sword Demon.

“What are you doing?” Young Master Han asked stoically.

“Remember: We never attack our brothers, even if it means our deaths!” Dusky Cloud bellowed.

“Idiot!” Young Master Han was not impressed.

“What did you say?!” Dusky Cloud was about to wail on him, but not through the use of an in-game skill or technique. Just as he jabbed his fist toward Young Master Han’s face, Sword Demon and Brother Assist separated them.

“Since you’re so lively, why don’t YOU think of a way to deal with Silver Moon?! With that skill of his, it’ll only be matter of time before he crushes your motley crew of ruffians!” Young Master Han coldly remarked.

“You m*th*r*f*ck*r! Who are you calling ruffians?!” Dusky Cloud tried to rush at the man again, but he was held back by Sword Demon.

“We’re all expert gamers to a certain degree; if you want to fight, use skills and equipment. Don’t punch and kick like school kids in a playground! How unprofessional!” Royal God Call did not step in to stop the fight before, yet here he was gloatingly chastising them.

No one bothered with his comment. Brother Assist tried to appease Dusky Cloud by saying, “Young Master Han has a point. You guys should quickly come up with a plan to deal with Silver Moon. You lot won’t stand a chance if he gathers his men and uses that skill again.”

Dusky Cloud did not say a word. He of course understood the logic behind their words. Glaring at Young Master Han one last time, he turned around to gather his men.

Before long, the only ones left in the plaza were the members of Young Master’s Elite mercenary group.

“Where’s Wounds?” Royal God Call asked as he searched left and right for the nowhere-to-be-found War Without Wounds.

“He got addicted to killing, so he joined the Warriors into assaulting the Thieves’ Union,” Sword Demon informed them.

“What about us?” Royal God Call questioned.

“We’ve all got some PK value, right? Let’s erase them together since we’ve nothing to do!” Sword Demon suggested.

However, the three shook their heads, “Nope. We don’t have any.”

Sword Demon felt depressed. He had followed Dusky Cloud and the lot in their assault, earning himself 4 PK points.

Yueye City was a mess – with fights and deaths everywhere – as if the devil himself had wreaked havoc on it.

No one else was in the streets besides the players of the two PvPing powerhouses. Even those who wanted to watch the fights had to stop themselves, as the situation in Yueye City right now was definitely not suitable for onlookers and spectators. If players so much as look at any of these PvPers the wrong way, they would most likely garner the resentment of both sides.

Gu Fei made his way toward the Bounty Assignment Hall. Along the way, he could see the Past Deeds’ players running in every direction as they were chased by the Past Deeds Eradication Army.

Gu Fei felt as if he had the King’s Command skill of Silver Moon’s King’s Blade. This was because of the two PvPing forces’ reactions whenever they encountered him: The Past Deeds’ guild members would prostrate themselves on the ground and dramatically begin fleeing. Meanwhile, the Past Deeds Eradication Army would quickly feel as if they had gained a strong backer. With just his presence, Thieves would boldly engage Warriors and Mages would chase after Archers.

Gu Fei actually did not intend to join their skirmishes, as he had

firmly resolved not to increase his PK value beyond 29 points.

The Bounty Assignment Hall was the most popular place in Yueye City, yet right now it was almost deserted. After all, who would dare take ‘Bounty Mission’ at the present situation? Was it not as good as courting death if the target belonged to one of the two forces mutually slaughtering one another in the city? Those currently at Bounty Assignment Hall were merely enjoying the sight of the Wanted Players list constantly getting updated. Moreover, many clues could be gleaned between the two parties’ showdown from it.

As an unassuming Mage entered the hall, he immediately heard someone cheering, “Wow! This one has 7 PK points now. How savage!”

The Mage quickly went up to the person who had said this and asked, “Where?”

The person promptly pointed to the mission interface listing the said fugitive. The unassuming Mage took that ‘Bounty Mission’ without hesitation.

The person dumbly watched the Mage until the latter exited the hall.

“That guy is insane! He just took the ‘Bounty Mission’ for that fugitive with 7 PK points!”

“Shhhhh!” the man beside him shushed him.

“What?” the person asked, puzzled by the other’s reaction.

“He’s this one!” The person pulled out the overall Wanted Players list and pointed at the top fugitive displayed on it. It was the one with serial number 27149.

Chapter 94 - Erasing PK Points

Gu Fei quickly made his way toward the freshly updated coordinates of the target for his current 'Bounty Mission'. At this moment, he was actually feeling quite depressed. This was because of the way the players in Yueye City were treating him. One example was the Past Deeds; whenever the guild's members saw Gu Fei, they would quickly run away as if he had the plague. Dusky Cloud's group was no better. Despite their cordial treatment of him, he could still sense a hint of animosity radiating from them. Gu Fei was actually an amiable person, yet everyone in this city seemed to think of him as the devil incarnate.

At present, few people actually knew what had started the guild war. From the perspective of Young Master's Elite mercenary group, this war was instigated for the purpose of helping Gu Fei get out of his predicament. Therefore, if one counted all the men of the two forces, it could be said that Gu Fei had dragged a thousand men into his problem. When he thought of this, Gu Fei could not help but feel slightly abashed. Just what meritorious deed had he accomplished in life to have so many men sacrificing their lives for his sake?

But when Gu Fei thought more about it, it was actually only the members of Young Master's Elite mercenary group who were concerned about his well-being. Dusky Cloud and his comrades merely participated in the war because they had vested interest in the Past Deeds' destruction. Speaking of the Past Deeds' players, they would probably have many sleepless nights if they found out that the reason they had suffered this devastating blow was due to them wanting to exact vengeance on Gu Fei by taking the 'Bounty Mission' for him.

This was exactly what spoiling the ship for a halfpenny worth of tar meant.

Gu Fei continued heading toward the target's coordinates as he

pondered on this. Shortly after, he found himself in front of the Warrior Encampment; the coordinates pointed to this place unchangingly.

The Warrior Encampment was currently the liveliest place in Yueye City. This was because the Past Deeds Eradication Army had allocated most of its forces here.

The King's Command skill of Silver Moon had the most effect on Warriors. Since they could not find traces of Silver Moon himself, Dusky Cloud and his army had no choice but to set the Past Deeds' Warriors as their main target to kill and to hunt. They had employed the same strategy as before of assigning a job class' spawn point with the job class that it was weak against. Hence, a large number of the Past Deeds Eradication Army's Mages currently surrounded the Warrior Encampment.

Silver Moon with his King's Blade would not be that much of a threat as long as the Past Deeds' Warriors remained trapped within this spawn point. Obviously, the Past Deeds Eradication Army's actions still revolved around the 'removing the firewood from under the pot' stratagem.

When Gu Fei showed up nonchalantly at the Warrior Encampment, the surrounding players, especially the ones with the Mage job class as Gu Fei, could not help but feel deep respect for him. Nearly all the Mages around the safe zone idolized him to the point of hero worship.

How can he have such high Magic Attack Power? There must be a secret to it, was every Mage's thought.

As for those with a different job class, their admiration of him was marred by jealousy, "G*dd*mn! The Mage job class is just too OP. I would've chosen to be a Mage if I'd known about it...."

"Hey, guys!" Gu Fei waved to them as a form of greeting. He then entered the safe zone while craning his neck. The coordinates indicated that his target was inside.

The safe zone was currently very crowded, as it was crammed with many Past Deeds' Warriors. All these Warriors were stuck inside and were waiting for their fellow guildmates to rescue them.

Gu Fei felt relieved upon seeing them. He had initially been worrying that the target for his current 'Bounty Mission' was someone on Dusky Cloud's side. If that had been the case, Gu Fei would not have known what to do. Fortunately, this worry could now be laid to rest, as he had just ascertained that his target was a Past Deeds' player.

As Gu Fei stepped inside the safe zone, the Past Deeds' Warriors exchanged apprehensive looks and involuntarily backed away. These Warriors had experienced Silver Moon's King's Command oftentimes and were normally not afraid of anything. However, Gu Fei's feat of defeating them by casting Descending Wheel of Flames once instilled fear in their hearts.

When Gu Fei spotted his target among the crowd, he immediately raised his sword and shouted, "Descending Wheel of Flames!"

"Ah!" The Warriors scattered about. Each of them forgot that they were in a safe zone, as all the Warriors could think of was that the player they currently feared had just casted a spell.

Gu Fei cracked a smile. He then swiftly approached his target and delivered a slash.

The Warriors finally remembered that they were in a safe zone. They were about to point that fact out when they saw Gu Fei swing his sword at a fellow Warrior. Everyone felt stunned, Is this still a safe zone?

The Warrior raised his claymore to fight back after being assaulted by Gu Fei. Unfortunately for him, Gu Fei was not someone afraid of a one-on-one fight. In a few moves, he collapsed in a heap by Gu Fei's feet. The Warrior then faded away in a stream of white light, as the sound of a cell door slamming echoed.

Everyone reeled from shock, Too scary! He killed our fellow Warrior until he could no longer respawn. Where did this guy send him? Did his killing confuse even this game's system?

At the moment, Gu Fei was feeling so happy at ridding himself of 7 PK points in such a short time that he could barely stop himself from laughing. Nice! This method's efficiency is too high, Gu Fei cheerfully thought to himself. He exited the Warrior Encampment without a backward glance, leaving behind a bunch of Warriors quaking in their boots. After experiencing such a huge PvP, many players were still high strung. Hence, none of them was clear-headed enough to consider the possibility of Gu Fei accepting a 'Bounty Mission', which allowed him to attack his target even in a safe zone, and of him clearing off his PK value by sending that Warrior to the underground prison. Everyone's current thought was: Where did that Warrior die off to?

One of them tried contacting the Warrior but failed.

Everyone fearfully started discussing what had just happened.

However, what made them feel even more frightened was Gu Fei's return not too long after.

Gu Fei wore a surprised look on his face. When he went to obtain another 'Bounty Mission' for a player with 6 PK points, he did not expect that he would end up at this place once more.

"Descending Wheel of Flames!" Gu Fei raised his sword and announced loudly.

No one was fooled this time. The Warriors steeled themselves and stood their ground firmly.

A flame wheel appeared above their heads, but the Warriors remained resolutely standing.

"Descend!" Gu Fei chanted, seemingly not bothered that not one of them had tried fleeing from him this time.

The Warriors remained resolutely standing while looking up, but

the flame wheel actually descended upon them. They were all crying and yelling while attempting to evade when that happened, but it was too late.

While players could cast spells in the safe zones, those spells could never actually be commanded to attack others under normal circumstances, so what was going on right now?

When the flame wheel completed its descent, they felt tremendous heat radiating from it. In the end... They remained fine.

Everyone felt even more confused at this. Suddenly, someone among them exclaimed, “Where’s our fellow Warrior?! Where did he go?!”

Everyone looked around carefully at the Warrior’s words. Indeed, one of their fellow Warriors had disappeared!

The Warriors’ minds were in chaos. This was evident from their use of the word ‘disappeared’ instead of ‘dead’ or ‘killed’.

Their faces turned ashen as they exchanged fearful looks. Once more, someone among them exclaimed, “Ahh!”

“What now?” everyone asked, rattled.

“27149 is also gone!” the person announced.

“You f*ck*r! He left through the entrance just now,” everyone cursed.

“What’s going on? Just where in the world did our fellow Warrior go?” everyone wondered.

“It must be a bug! Quickly contact a GM!” someone suggested. Quite a lot of them started contacting the online GMs.

Parallel World’s GMs were just like the ones in other MMOs: They would first complain about the insufficiency in detail of the messages sent by players. They then would ask the players to send more detailed messages. Once the players submitted detailed

recounts of incidents, the GMs would then tell the players that they had just assisted them; hence, they would have to wait a few minutes before they could get back to them.

In the case of these Warriors in the safe zone, after those few minutes of waiting time were over, they contacted the GMs again, only to be told to wait for a few more minutes....

Just as this round of 'few minutes' was over and they were about to message the GMs once more, Gu Fei arrived for the third time.

"Descending Wheel of Flames!" Gu Fei promptly casted the spell once he entered the Warrior Encampment.

All were rooted to their spots for a bit with their faces showing a look of helplessness.

When the flame wheel appeared, no one stood there dumbly like last time and quickly scattered about. Since Gu Fei could not make the spell descend without a target, he drew his sword and chased one of the running Warriors instead. He swiftly cut his target a few times. All the Warriors gawked as yet another Warrior 'disappeared' before their eyes.

Gu Fei felt that it was odd, Why're none of these guys stepping up to help? Since these Past Deeds' men took the 'Bounty Mission' for me, they should be able to attack me in the safe zone, too!

Gu Fei did not know that in the eyes of these players, 27149 was no longer just a serial number of their 'Bounty Mission'. When they saw Fugitive 27149, their thought was not, "Ah! It's the mission target! Finally found him!"; instead, it was: "F*cking devil's spawn! RUN QUICKLY!"

After killing off a third Warrior, Gu Fei's PK value dropped down to 10 points. He had turned in one with 7 PK points and another with 6 PK points. All in all, he had cleared off 19 PK points since the start of his bounty hunting. Gu Fei cheerfully left the Warrior Encampment, leaving a mass of shivering Warriors once more.

“Why do I always end up there when I pick up a new ‘Bounty Mission’?” Gu Fei could not fathom this, so he attributed it to his luck.

In actual fact, the three Warriors Gu Fei had just killed were part of Silver Moon’s elite group of Warriors. They had followed their guild leader in attacking the various spawn points earlier. They were the ones that had assaulted the Archer Range, attacked the Knights’ Barracks, swarmed the Warrior Encampment, and, lastly, charged at the Past Deeds Eradication Army’s defensive formation in the Mage Academy. Only Gu Fei’s timely arrival had ended their killing spree.

The three were part of the small strike team that had experienced the most battles today. Adding the fact that they were always victorious in their attacks, these Warriors naturally managed to acquire a higher PK value than the other war participants. These Warriors’ high PK value sealed their fate as Gu Fei’s ‘Bounty Mission’ targets.

By the time Gu Fei made his fourth trip to the spawn point after obtaining a new ‘Bounty Mission’, the Warriors had already wised up on what was happening.

Gu Fei no longer looked as fearsome to them as before. While his spells were powerful, only Gu Fei’s mission target would get hurt by them.

“Let’s surround this guy and give him a good beating! Even if we’ve to sacrifice one of us!” The Warriors gnashed their teeth as they decided on this.

While the suggestion was logical, the reality was quite far from their expectation. None of them predicted that Gu Fei would not bother to enter the Warrior Encampment and simply shout from the outside, “Descending Wheel of Flames!”

The Warriors were incensed.

It did not matter whether they were part of Past Deeds or Dusky Cloud's gang; they were all the type to enjoy the violence of PvP. They were hot-blooded and courageous players that did not fear death.

So when they heard Gu Fei casting his spell in such a languid manner, they became enraged to the point of erupting.

"I'll go out and kick him even if I die trying!" All shared the same sentiment and flocked outside to confront Gu Fei.

Gu Fei felt shocked upon seeing the Past Deeds' Warriors rushing toward him. He never thought that these knuckleheads would react aggressively to his spell casting. He quickly made his getaway from this mass of enraged Warriors.

The Warriors dashed out of the safe zone and instantly heard countless shouts of "Descending Wheel of Flames!" The Mages surrounding the Warrior Encampment casted flame wheels that were faster and more ferocious than Gu Fei's.

Everything happened in the blink of an eye. The Warriors that had rushed outside found themselves back inside again.

Before they could react, the sound of a sword cutting someone reached their ears. Another Warrior had disappeared under Gu Fei's sword.

"Only 4 PK points left!" Gu Fei muttered to himself, as he ran off once more.

Chapter 95 - Farewell, Yueye City

After obtaining another ‘Bounty Mission’, the ever talented Gu Fei bounded toward the Warrior Encampment to erase his final 4 PK points without checking his target’s coordinates. When he arrived at the location, Gu Fei was dumbfounded at what he saw: Not one Past Deeds’ member could be seen inside the safe zone.

“Where’re they?” Gu Fei asked the garrisoned players of Past Deeds Eradication Army outside.

“They logged off!” everyone replied with a grimace.

Gu Fei finally realized why he had not heard the sound of the coordinates refreshing as he made his way over to this spawn point. He opened the mission log and took a look. As expected, the ‘Bounty Mission’ target was tagged as ‘offline’ in the column where the coordinates were displayed.

These people are so shameless! Gu Fei thought to himself in dissatisfaction. When he took the ‘Bounty Mission’, the target was clearly shown as online. If that guy’s got a shred of decency, he should’ve waited for me to off him before going offline! Gu Fei sighed in frustration.

The target going offline was a frustrating matter to a player because he or she could not cancel the ‘Bounty Mission’ on his or her volition. This was currently among the most illogical features of Parallel World.

Gu Fei gazed forlornly at the deserted Warrior Encampment for some time. Meanwhile, the players of Past Deeds Eradication Army outside the safe zone were at a loss at what to do next. The Past Deeds’ players were waging intense battles in the other spawn points, yet the Warriors in this safe zone had simply logged off. Just how could this be explained? Were these Warriors not the main force of Past Deeds?

When the news reached Dusky Cloud, he rushed toward the Warrior Encampment. Sword Demon had relinquished his duties as the Past Deeds Eradication Army's commander and Dusky Cloud became its de facto leader.

"Past Deeds is done for!" Dusky Cloud cheered upon seeing the empty safe zone for Warriors. Gu Fei looked backward when he heard Dusky Cloud's voice. Awkwardness swiftly pervaded the air as their gazes coincidentally collided.

Eight hours ago, Dusky Cloud, along with some of his buddies, had tried to kill Gu Fei to avenge his best friend, No Smile. Eight hours later, Gu Fei, along with his friends, had greatly helped Dusky Cloud's gang wage war against Past Deeds. From start to finish, he had been instrumental in starting the guild war and in turning the tide of the battle in favor of the Past Deeds Eradication Army.

Presently, Dusky Cloud was in a dilemma on how he should treat Gu Fei. Recalling Celestial Pig's admonition to him earlier about treating matters separately, Dusky Cloud could not help but reflexively nod his head in agreement. He was about to thank Gu Fei for what he had done earlier when he saw the latter take two steps forward. Gu Fei was gone in a flash of white light immediately after entering the safe zone. Dusky Cloud bewilderedly opened his mission log and saw that Fugitive 27149 was tagged as 'offline'.

Having spent over eight hours in Parallel World, Gu Fei considered it as a day's work done. After he said his goodbyes to Sword Demon and the others on the private mercenary channel, Gu Fei logged off to rest.

Gu Fei going offline naturally did not mean that the war had ended. Yueye City remained as a huge PvP field, persisting even when he entered the game the next day.

When he logged in at the Warrior Encampment, his spawning

location happened to be in the middle of the two opposing sides: the Past Deeds' Warriors behind and the Past Deeds Eradication Army in front. Gu Fei blinked his eyes in disbelief at what he was seeing. He hurriedly exited the spawn point when he felt killing intent emanating from behind him. These Past Deeds' Warriors had at least learned their lesson, so they did not chase after him this time.

"Have you guys... been online all this while?" Gu Fei asked in astonishment, eyeing the players outside the safe zone. Each of them looked weary.

"We took turns resting offline," the person facing Gu Fei answered.

"Don't you guys have places to be in reality?" Gu Fei almost uttered this sentence but stopped himself. He recalled Young Master Han and the others' reaction when he had asked them this question before. The idea was... foreign to people whose lifeblood was playing online games.

Gu Fei was not standing in the Warrior Encampment for long when Sword Demon and the other mercenary group members sent him messages. They had agreed to return to Yunduan City together, so the others were waiting for Gu Fei to come online.

"I'm off!" Gu Fei bid the players around him goodbye. Although they barely knew one another, they had at least spent some time together and shared the same side in this guild war.

These people were momentarily stunned, before hurriedly asking, "Where to?"

"Yunduan City!" Gu Fei answered, as he recalled something, "Oh, yeah! Almost forgot!"

Gu Fei darted back inside the Warrior Encampment and swept his gaze around. He then rushed toward a Warrior while wielding Moonlit Nightfalls in hand. The said Warrior could only gape at Gu

Fei's approaching figure, not knowing what to do as he died under Gu Fei's sword after a few slashes. By the time the other Past Deeds' Warriors reacted, Gu Fei had long since dusted his hands and left the safe zone. The Warriors all thumped their chests and cursed at Gu Fei's shamelessness for not showing any indication that he was about to kill one of them.

Gu Fei smiled amiably as he bid the players of Past Deeds Eradication Army goodbye. He also did not neglect to sincerely thank the Past Deeds' Warriors for helping him clear off his PK value. After all, his high PK value was the reason he had come to Yueye City after fleeing from Yunduan City. Finally, Gu Fei was a free man once again.

Gu Fei's PK value reset to zero when he turned his mission in at the Bounty Assignment Hall. Upon exiting the hall and seeing no one present, he quickly took off his mask with a relieved sigh. From this moment onward, the serial number 27149 would be relegated to the annals of history of Parallel World.

On his way to meet up with Sword Demon and the rest, Gu Fei remembered Xiaoyu and hurriedly fired off a message to her.

Xiaoyu was surprised, "We just got here the day before, yet we're already leaving?"

To think it's only been two days. Everything feels surreal... Gu Fei was slightly maudlin. Having experienced many things in these past two days, he could not help but feel that time was passing by quite slowly.

Xiaoyu had spent her time repeatedly completing normal quests, so she of course found the passage of time to be much faster. Xiaoyu had wholly submerged herself into finding a way to retrieve the riches found within NPC Adrian's cellar in Yeguang Village; thus, she knew nothing of the happenings in Yueye City yesterday.

"When you logged off, did you notice anything strange?" Gu Fei

found himself admiring Xiaoyu's ability to evade trouble.

"Nothing at all!" Xiaoyu answered.

"Where did you log off?" Gu Fei asked another question.

"Fighters' Dojo," Xiaoyu replied.

Gu Fei somewhat got it. Since few players had chosen the Fighter job class, the Fighters' Dojo had not been one of the PvP fields. Thus, it became the only real safe zone in Yueye City. "How coincidental for you to log off there!" he commented.

"Mhm. I logged off at the Warrior Encampment on day one, and—heh. It's kinda embarrassing but I couldn't find my way back to that safe zone on day two. When I asked people for directions, they told me to log off at the Fighters' Dojo instead," Xiaoyu explained.

"Didn't they tell you why?" Gu Fei probed.

"No need to. It's obviously because that safe zone is the closest. You're so silly!" Xiaoyu teased Gu Fei.

Gu Fei was quite annoyed, finally asking, "When are you returning to Yunduan City?"

"Ah! I don't intend to head back yet. There're lots of quests in Yueye City! I feel I could spend a lifetime doing them. When you get back, please help me convince Sis July to move Amethyst Rebirth Guild's base over here!" Xiaoyu requested.

"Sure... I'll try..." Gu Fei wiped nonexistent sweat off his forehead. Speaking to Xiaoyu was much more exhausting than clashing with Silver Moon.

After ending his conversation with Xiaoyu, he sent Will-low and Coward's Savior a message each. The two were his freshly acquired friends while adventuring in Yueye City, so it was only right to say goodbye to them as well.

Coward's Savior was not online. As for Will-low, she replied at once, "I'm going to Yunduan City as well!"

“Why?”

“Have you forgotten? All my friends moved to Yunduan City, so I’m going there to meet up with them,” Will-low reminded Gu Fei.

“Oh. If that’s the case... wanna go together?” Gu Fei asked.

“Sure!”

Gu Fei told her the meet-up location.

Outside a tavern’s entrance by Yueye City’s north gate, Gu Fei spotted Sword Demon and the rest. However, he did not expect Dusky Cloud and his buddies to be present as well. Gu Fei wondered if he should cover his face or not.

“Don’t come over. Act as if you don’t know us!” Sword Demon had obviously spotted Gu Fei as well.

“Roger!” Gu Fei replied, as he continued walking toward the tavern. He casually swept his gaze over the people that had gathered by the entrance. Right before entering the establishment, Gu Fei overheard Dusky Cloud saying, “It’s not every day that you’d find yourself in Yueye City. Why not spend a few more days playing around here before heading back?”

Man, that line’s so cliché... Gu Fei thought to himself. Suddenly, he received a message from Young Master Han, “Do you realize how fake your casual glance was?”

“What do you mean?” Gu Fei asked, puzzled.

“Seeing my peerless beauty, anybody would linger their gaze on me. You should’ve been in a daze for quite a while before realizing my good looks are for real. That would’ve been far more convincing,” Young Master Han criticized.

Gu Fei felt goosebumps rose on his skin. “Your beauty doesn’t excuse your grossness!” Just as this message was sent out, Young Master Han appeared right in front of him with a blackened expression. Gu Fei immediately warned, “Don’t forget you’re a

Priest! I can easily kill you.”

Young Master Han exited the establishment with a ghastly expression. Gu Fei had no choice but to sit alone in the tavern as Dusky Cloud’s gang and Sword Demon conversed outside.

Suddenly, a lady entered the tavern, stood within arm’s reach of Gu Fei, and looked around. Will-low messaged Gu Fei, “Where are you?”

He tugged on her cloak, “Right here.”

Will-low lowered her head, looked at Gu Fei, stepped away from him, and sent another message to Gu Fei, “Where? I’m here.”

“I’m here! Didn’t I tell you I’m right here?” Gu Fei tapped on the table.

Will-low skeptically looked at him once more. Gu Fei felt somewhat annoyed. Were his looks so different from how she had imagined him to be? That was illogical! Only Sword Demon had the looks that could subvert someone’s imagination to such a degree.

Looking at each other for this long was getting awkward. Gu Fei coughed lightly, “Why’re you just staring at me?”

Will-low quickly came over and took a seat beside Gu Fei, asking softly, “Did Thousand Miles Drunk ask you to wait for me here?”

“What’re you talking about? I’m Thousand Miles Drunk,” Gu Fei replied indignantly.

“How is that possible?!” Will-low exclaimed. Gu Fei waited for her to refute him more, but she bewilderedly blurted out instead, “Eh? Why is the mission gone?”

“What mission?” Gu Fei asked.

“The ‘Bounty Mission’ for Miles that I’ve obtained,” Will-low sputtered.

“Oh!” Gu Fei finally understood. Will-low did not recognize him

because the serial number 27149 was no longer displayed on him. He quickly explained to her, “I’ve already erased my PK value.”

“What? I remember you having 29 PK points last night! How did you get rid of it this fast?” Will-low asked.

“Mhm. There’re lots of fights going on all over the city, so many people accumulated high PK value!” Gu Fei explained.

Will-low instantly understood.

“Oh, right. I’ve a minor issue I hope you can help me with,” Gu Fei said.

Chapter 96 - Will-low wants to join the group

Outside the tavern, Dusky Cloud and his gang spent almost an hour saying their goodbyes to Sword Demon. In actual fact, not many words could be exchanged between two parties that had only known each other for two days. Saying goodbye should take five minutes at most, yet Dusky Cloud stubbornly stayed and was even currently discussing with Sword Demon the ideal stat point distribution for Thieves.

Standing by the side, Young Master Han laughed mockingly and said, “Stop dawdling. Fugitive 27149 isn’t coming.”

Dusky Cloud’s true intention was uncovered with that single remark. These players claimed that they were here to give Sword Demon a send off while their real goal was to lay eyes on Fugitive 27149’s true visage. Gu Fei had become prominent in Yueye City these days. However, his face had remained hidden from start to finish as he wielded a blade in one hand and a Chinese broadsword in the other. While many players admired his getup, none of them knew what he looked like or what his name was. Only Will-low in Yueye City knew of Gu Fei’s appearance, and she had seen it not too long ago.

They felt slightly embarrassed when Young Master Han exposed their real intention. But considering how he had tolerated their presence for the past hour, he had at least saved them some face. Although Dusky Cloud felt discontented with Young Master Han, he did not snap at him this time. Dusky Cloud tried to make light of the situation by laughing self-deprecatingly, “Ha ha... Looks like we don’t qualify to meet him. Guess we’ll have to trouble Sword Demon to thank him for us. I had intended to do that at the Warrior Encampment yesterday, but he quickly logged off before I could say a word to him.”

Sword Demon smiled and nodded his head, “I’ll be sure to tell him.”

“We won’t bother you guys any further, then,” Dusky Cloud said.

Cliché parting comments, such as “Come and play whenever you’re free”, “Take care on the road”, “Stay in touch”, et cetera, were all spouted before they truly departed.

The five mercenary group members entered the tavern and saw Gu Fei moving his table back to its original position.

“What’re you doing?” Sword Demon asked, puzzled.

“Uh... I feel more secure when I’m leaning against a wall. But since we’re leaving now, I’m moving this table back to its original spot,” Gu Fei answered defensively.

“You’re eavesdropping, right?” Young Master Han bluntly exposed Gu Fei while flashing him a mocking smile.

“Ha ha... I felt bored doing nothing, so I listened in,” Gu Fei tried to play it off, just like what Dusky Cloud had done not too long ago.

Young Master Han noticed Will-low sitting beside Gu Fei, so he remarked dryly, “You must have been really bored to busy yourself intently in this one hour.”

Unexpectedly, Sword Demon went up and greeted Will-low, “You’re here, too!”

“Yup! I’ll be going with you guys to Yunduan City,” Will-low said happily.

Royal God Call had a dumbstruck look on his face as he whispered to Gu Fei, “You’re quite the player to reel in a lady to return with you in just two days. How did you do it? Teach this lil’ bro!”

Gu Fei was annoyed by his insinuation, “What does a kid like you know? Go play with yourself.”

Royal God Call was affronted by his dismissal.

Gu Fei introduced Will-low to the five men. Besides the new IGN Young Master Han specifically created for this game, Will-low recognized the IGNs of the other players. She punctuated every introduction with bouts of shock. When Gu Fei got to Brother Assist, Will-low bounced excitedly, “Brother Assist?! You’re my idol, you know?”

Everyone was astonished by her reaction. Even Brother Assist did not know how to respond, “Oh? Even I have fans in this day and age?”

“Yup! Collecting information and analyzing data are my hobbies, too!” Will-low exclaimed.

“Ha ha ha! This lady here has a bright future!” Brother Assist told everyone. Truthfully, Brother Assist’s gaming style was often criticized unlike the others. To describe him using past gaming knowledge, he was not a player with amazing control, high level, or overpowered equipment; what he had was the theoretical knowledge of how to properly distribute stats for every job class, what kind of skills did the different job classes had, and how to best utilize the job class that was chosen. Any gaming noobs who encountered him would definitely be in luck, yet Brother Assist’s ability to contribute when it came to an actual fight was very minute. Many people could not understand why he spent his entire day meaninglessly obsessing over these things, but they could see that he actually enjoyed doing it.

Spending most of his time discussing matters with other players and posting the top discussion threads on the game forums were how Brother Assist acquired his fame; the same fame that Sword Demon and the others greatly enjoyed in their respective fields of expertise, yet greatly diminished once outside these domains. In contrast, Brother Assist’s expertise that could be applied in all areas allowed his fame to be more constant than the other four gaming experts.

However, fame did not equate to strength. The players that

despised Brother Assist's work were greater than those that admired it. The players who were interested in researching and analyzing data components were naturally few as well. It was no wonder everyone was surprised when Will-low claimed that she idolized Brother Assist.

As everyone was feeling gleeful, Will-low continued speaking, "Are you guys part of one mercenary group? Can I join your group?"

Everyone looked at Young Master Han.

Will-low definitely did not qualify to join Young Master's Elite mercenary group considering the level requirement criterion that they had set during its inception. But ultimately, Young Master Han was the one who had set this criterion and the rest were more or less indifferent to that criterion. This matter could be considered resolved as long as he gave his approval.

Gu Fei had his sight trained on to Royal God Call. Recalling that time when Sword Demon had asked him to join their mercenary group, Brother Assist, War Without Wounds, and Young Master Han did not voice objections except for Royal God Call. And yet, this kid currently did not voice any objection when this level 24 Thief had asked to join their mercenary group. A stupid smile was even plastered all over his face as he salivated at the prospect. This kid's disappointing. Truly and utterly disappointing, Gu Fei thought spitefully to himself. Royal God Call usually boasted about his abilities, yet his carnal desire was in full display when faced with this lady. It was no wonder why Amethyst Rebirth's ladies showed such a strong reaction when a male player joined their guild. It was lecherous men like him that sullied male players' good name.

Will-low finally caught on to who was calling the shots in this group. Fixing her gaze on to Young Master Han, she happily said, "This big sis here must be the group leader. Let me join the group, pretty please?"

Big sis! The harmonious atmosphere instantly dispersed. Everyone nervously looked at Young Master Han as an amiable smile slowly appeared from his originally expressionless face. Young Master Han patted Will-low's shoulder and warmly said, "So you wish to join our group! Not a chance." He then turned around and told the others, "Let's hit the road."

Young Master Han's words vastly contrasted his friendly tone, so Will-low was momentarily frozen in place. After a bit, she asked, "What happened?"

Sword Demon sighed deeply as he left the tavern. War Without Wounds laughed weakly and exited the establishment as well.

"When it comes to information gathering, you've still got a long way to go," with a heavy heart, Brother Assist sincerely said to Will-low.

"Don't worry, leave this to me. Do you have QQ? Let's—"

"A kid like you should quietly play in a corner!" Gu Fei swiftly butted in and interrupted Royal God Call's pickup line. He then directed a troubled gaze on to Will-low, "Couldn't you tell that 'she' is actually a 'he'? Although he doesn't look like one, his voice is a dead giveaway! He clearly spoke quite a few words since he entered the tavern."

"Ah? I totally didn't notice..." Will-low said gloomily.

Gu Fei had no other words to say. This was a mistake he would expect Xiaoyu to make but not from Will-low who did not seem to be an airhead at all!

"I'll go apologize to him," Will-low moved to chase after Young Master Han.

"Forget it," Gu Fei tried to stop her but he was too late; Will-low had already run outside the premise. He rushed outside, only to find Will-low bowing repeatedly to Young Master Han to show her contrition.

Young Master Han still had that amiable smile on his face, saying “I’m not that petty. This often happens to me, so I’m used to it. You can’t join our group solely because you’re not strong enough. Our team...” Young Master Han looked at the others, before pointing at Gu Fei, “You know what he’s capable, right? And yet, he’s the weakest among us. If you wish to join our group, you need to at least be at his level.”

Will-low glumly said, “It seems I can never join your group.”

Young Master Han nodded his head solemnly, “That’s why I said those words before.”

Meanwhile, the others gathered in a corner to quietly discuss the situation. “Is he telling the truth or lying? Does he really not mind?” War Without Wounds asked.

“It’s definitely a lie. Just look at his smile,” Brother Assist answered.

“Sword Demon, you know him best. What do you think?” Royal God Call asked.

“It’s half true, half false!” Sword Demon replied.

“What do you mean?” Royal God Call pressed on.

“Will-low’s level is truly not acceptable to him. But she has touched a nerve coincidentally, so he’s using this opportunity to snub her. I think that’s his initial intention, anyway,” Gu Fei chimed in.

Sword Demon looked at Gu Fei in surprise, “You’ve got quite a good grasp of his character.”

“I’ve got no choice,” Gu Fei sighed, “His personality is too obvious.”

“How come I can’t see that?” Royal God Call scratched his head.

“What does a kid like you know? I’ve eaten more salt than you’ve eaten rice,” Gu Fei remarked.

Royal God Call was getting fed up with him by now.

“Alright, let’s go!” After Will-low and Young Master Han concluded their talk, everyone finally hit the road.

“I’ll definitely join your mercenary group,” Will-low whispered as she walked beside Gu Fei.

“So you’ve not given up yet, huh,” Gu Fei mused.

“Of course, not.”

“Good luck!” Gu Fei smiled.

“Hey, what did you do to get so OP?” Will-low asked inquisitively.

“Been training hard for twenty years nonstop even to these days,” Gu Fei answered.

“What have you been training hard?” Will-low asked, baffled.

“Kung fu,” Gu Fei replied.

“You mean to say you’re so good at PvP wholly because you’ve been training kung fu?” Will-low had watched the entire process of Gu Fei’s battle with Vast Lushness. That fight was not like Gu Fei’s usual one-on-one bout that ended in two or three moves. Having spent quite some time observing him, she was convinced that Gu Fei was not an average player.

Gu Fei nodded his head.

“Oh? Can I learn it, too?” Will-low asked.

“If you’ve got the passion for it, of course I can teach you some moves. But you can forget it if your intention for learning kung fu is to be like me in-game. I doubt you’ll be able to devote so much time to learning it,” Gu Fei candidly told her.

While Gu Fei had spent twenty years practicing kung fu, what he had learned in those years was incomparable to an average practitioner’s. Kung fu was already his entire being with his

lifestyle revolving around it. Moreover, talent factored when learning this particular martial art. The time an average person had to spend into practicing kung fu up to Gu Fei's current level would take about... forty or sixty years. Even their whole lives might not be enough to attain Gu Fei's kung fu prowess.

QQ - is an application or program that the Chinese use to send instant-messages to one another, except it is way bigger and has multiple uses aside from providing people a means to communicate. Think of Facebook Messenger, Discord, Whatsapp, etc., and then add in all sorts of crazy things like Paypal, Venmo, and Skype.

Chapter 97 - Gu Fei wants to quit the guild

Gu Fei and everyone finally made it back to Yunduan City after a three-hour arduous journey through the Oolong Mountain Range. During this journey, the busiest person among them had been Royal God Call, as he tried every possible method to show off in front of Will-low. Not one monster was on the mountain road to kill, so Royal God Call could regrettably not use this most obvious method in online games to woo a girl. This made things difficult for him. With no other choice, he resorted to cracking almost forty terrible jokes throughout the whole trip.

This kid is childish. Truly and utterly childish! Gu Fei was unimpressed by Royal God Call's actions, so he deliberately walked far behind the pack to avoid him and his not-even-funny jokes. However, it was obvious who Will-low would choose to walk with among the group. Wherever Gu Fei was, Will-low would be right next to him. And where Will-low would be, Royal God Call would also be around. Therefore, Gu Fei did not miss even one of Royal God Call's forty plus horrible jokes.

Finally, they arrived in Yunduan City! Powerful emotions surged inside Gu Fei at this moment, as he hurriedly stepped through the city's archway entrance. He no longer had to hear Royal God Call's terrible jokes.

Royal God Call seemed to have been waiting for this moment as well. He deepened his voice and said to Will-low, "You won't be familiar with the places in Yunduan City since you're new; how about I give you a quick tour?" This fox had long abandoned his fellow mercenaries and was hoping to land himself a date with Will-low.

Unexpectedly, Will-low sniggered, "No need. I've got plenty of friends in this city."

"Oh, is that so? Why don't you introduce me to your friends,

then?” Royal God Call said without missing a beat.

Gu Fei and the rest could only watch Royal God Call shamelessly follow Will-low to meet her friends.

“Send me a message,” Will-low singled out Gu Fei before leaving the group.

Gu Fei nodded his head in acknowledgement. He understood what she had asked him to do. As the two walked away, he could hear Royal God Call saying to Will-low, “No need to trouble Miles. Just look for me if you need anything....”

Although Gu Fei had no intentions toward Will-low like Royal God Call, he still wished to tell Royal God Call: “You f*ck*r!”

“Shall we leave as well?” Young Master Han probed the others.

“Let’s!” Sword Demon affirmed.

“Anyone looking to have a drink can join me,” Young Master Han headed toward the direction of a tavern. The rest did not bother to look at him as they left to settle their personal matters.

Young Master’s Elite mercenary group only gathered for two reasons: They had a mission or they wanted to drink at Ray’s Bar. When it came to grinding, everyone would do it alone. Gu Fei found this strange because all the players he had met thus far always grouped up to grind together.

Sword Demon explained that their mercenary group’s idiosyncratic behavior was due to everyone’s professionalism as well as old habits, “While party grinding definitely increases efficiency and makes everyone suffer fewer setbacks, it makes one more dependent on his or her teammates. For us professionals, such reliance on others is detrimental. It’s essential for us to have the ability to stand on our own two feet in all settings and circumstances.”

Gu Fei received quite the shock. It was not due to Sword Demon’s sound reasoning that had similarity to Gu Fei’s belief as a kung fu

practitioner. What shocked him was Sword Demon's seriousness regarding the whole matter. Gaming was often regarded as a pastime, yet Sword Demon did not have that kind of mentality. Gaming seemed to contain his goals and ideals. Gu Fei was impressed by Sword Demon's ability to treat games with such seriousness.

As Gu Fei turned around after watching the gaming experts disappear from his field of view, he heard someone calling his IGN. He turned his head back and saw July and Luo Luo of Amethyst Rebirth Guild approaching him. He quickly greeted them, "Hey, it's been a while."

"Yes! What've you been up to these past two days?" Luo Luo was all smiles as she spoke to Gu Fei, somewhat implying that she knew very well what he had been up to.

Gu Fei had already expected this and had even taken sufficient precautions to prevent the exposure of his identity. And yet, no amount of preparation could prevent a determined person from uncovering the truth.

Fugitive 27149's appearance in Yueye City had already been revealed on the game forums. This did not mean anything to others, yet it was a clue to people who knew Gu Fei but did not know of his identity as Fugitive 27149. In fact, no players had traveled between Yunduan City and Yueye City before Gu Fei and Xiaoyu. There was hardly any difference between the two in-game cities, after all. Who would actually spend three hours journeying from one place to another similar place?

Thousand Miles Drunk left Yunduan City and Fugitive 27149 surfaced in Yueye City. Just this was already a damning evidence of Gu Fei being Fugitive 27149. Although many people did not know who had left Yunduan City for Yueye City, the ladies of Amethyst Rebirth did. Ultimately, Gu Fei and Xiaoyu had left for Yueye City together.

Seeing July and Luo Luo's expressions right now, Gu Fei deduced that the two had a hunch that he was Fugitive 27149. But since Gu Fei had come prepared, he readily answered Luo Luo's question, "I left with Xiaoyu to complete some quests over at Yueye City."

"Oh? What sort of quest could that be?" Luo Luo's smile remained unchanged. They knew that only Xiaoyu, the quest fanatic, would be willing to travel to another city three hours away for a run-of-the-mill quest. Gu Fei going to another city for the same reason did not seem probable.

Unfortunately for them, he actually had something of great value: a chain quest. Among all quests, it was the most sought-after by many players. With a chain quest, let alone three hours of traveling to another city, many players would be even willing to travel for thirty hours just to obtain it.

Once July and Luo Luo heard the two words 'chain quest', their facial expressions changed abruptly. Obtaining and completing a chain quest was a shocking affair, after all. If his reason for going to Yueye City was that, then they could not tell for sure that Gu Fei was Fugitive 27149.

"Are things good over in Yueye City?" July asked another question.

"Chaotic. Extremely chaotic. Players over there are PvP fanatics. All it takes is a few words for people to get into a fight. Dozens of guilds started warring in those two days I'd been in Yueye City. There's so much killing all over the city that no players dared to take a step out. Do you know that Mage that killed No Smile from this city? He's in Yueye City, too. I even saw him! It's a pity he's kept his face covered," Gu Fei rambled on.

While July and Luo Luo were exchanging looks, Gu Fei was pondering hard, Since my PK value is gone, no one can surely bring forward evidence that I was Fugitive 27149 once. If I'm gonna do such things next time, I'll make sure to keep in mind the PvP rules.

That way, I can avoid attracting so much attention. Too bad for future players unluckily assigned serial number 27149, though.

Serial number 27149 of a 'Bounty Mission' was randomly assigned by the system to a player. It merely indicated that a player was the 27149th PKer in Parallel World at a given moment. Any player that would get assigned this number from now on would surely have quite a rough time ahead of him or her.

The atmosphere became slightly awkward when the three stopped exchanging words for quite a while. After a bit, July changed her line of questioning, "Where's Xiaoyu? Didn't you return with her?"

"Nope. She's still doing quests over there. She actually wanted me to ask you guys if moving the guild over to Yueye City is possible," Gu Fei laughed.

"That Xiaoyu!" July shook her head, as she showed a forced smile.

"Oh, that's right!" Gu Fei suddenly slapped his forehead, recalling something, "I met a lady who's interested in joining your guild."

"Your' guild?" July said, "Don't forget; you're a member of it as well. You should be saying OUR guild, instead."

"I'm just waiting for you lot to get your twentieth member before leaving the guild!" Gu Fei reasoned.

"Oh. No wonder you're in a hurry to introduce her to 'our' guild," July remarked dryly.

Gu Fei simpered, neither admitting nor denying her allegation.

"When do you plan to have her come over, so that we can get to know her?" July sighed before asking.

"Immediately is good," Gu Fei replied, asking back, "How about you two? You guys free right now?"

“If we’re busy, will we be chatting idly with you right now?” July asked sarcastically.

Gu Fei could sense that July’s tone was off. She seemed to not be happy about something. For a moment, he was unsure whether he should call Will-low over or not.

July realized that she had forgotten herself. She hurriedly pulled herself together and maintained her usual impassive expression, saying, “Call her over now! We’ll wait at this tavern right here.”

Gu Fei nodded his head in acknowledgement and quickly sent a message to Will-low. The three then entered the tavern and secured some seats for everyone.

“You guys go ahead. I need to head to the warehouse to organize my items. I’ll be back soon,” July stood up just as they sat down.

Watching July leave the tavern, Gu Fei quickly asked Luo Luo, “Is July angry?”

“So you can tell.”

“Mhm....”

“Of course, she is. You’re in such a hurry to leave the guild with this look of dislike on you. She’ll naturally feel offended. Even I’m fuming,” Luo Luo said a bit crossly.

Gu Fei was confused. They were the ones who were angry that he had gotten into the guild. Now that he was finally leaving, they were still the ones getting mad. A woman’s thought was indeed a turbulent affair. It was comparable to the vilest kung fu technique with multiple facets.

“Say. Why’re you in such a rush to leave our guild?” Luo Luo asked in a slightly chiding tone.

“I’m in a rush? Am I?” Gu Fei answered with a question, perplexed.

“You’re not the only one who can grasp people’s thoughts.

Others can do so as well!” Luo Luo said exasperatedly.

“Uhm... I’m in no rush. Me leaving Amethyst Rebirth is what you guys want, right?” Gu Fei reasoned.

“Wanting you to leave is because you’re a male player. Not wanting you to leave is because you’re Thousand Miles Drunk,” Luo Luo alluded.

Gu Fei wrinkled his brows, “What’s the difference?”

The tavern door opened before Luo Luo could answer. Gu Fei waved his hands to get Will-low’s attention as she walked into the establishment. She had left the area not too long ago, so it was natural for her to be able to get back fast. When he spotted Royal God Call following behind Will-low, he suddenly had the urge to pull his sword out.

“Miles!” Royal God Call cheekily greeted Gu Fei with a wide grin on his face. He stood in a daze for a bit when he saw Luo Luo, before blurting out, “Ah, it’s another beauty!”

“See?!” Luo Luo said, “That’s the difference between male players and Thousand Miles Drunk.”

Chapter 98 - Begin Research

“So that’s how it is!” Seeing Royal God Call’s lewd expression, Gu Fei was of course unwilling to be labeled as the same sort of person.

Luo Luo continued speaking, “That’s why our attitude toward you has changed. As for you staying in our guild, that boils down to whether you’re happy to be part of it or not. We’ll let you decide on that. If it’s me, I won’t stay in a guild if I’m unhappy.”

“If that’s the case, then I guess I’ll stay!” Gu Fei smiled. Deciding whether to leave the guild or not based on his happiness was ludicrous, as he had never taken to heart something like being a part of a guild. Actually, he had never expected to find himself socializing in a guild and playing the game with a bunch of people. Since he felt that it would not affect him much, he would just stay in Amethyst Rebirth. In any case, Gu Fei only wanted to leave the guild after he had seen how unhappy the ladies were with him in it. Now that his departure would instead garner their ire, the easygoing Gu Fei would naturally not mind staying.

“He he! That’s much better,” Luo Luo giggled.

“I’ll take my leave first,” Gu Fei smilingly said as he got up, pointing at Will-low, “This lady here is the one I’m planning to introduce.”

“Hello! My IGN’s Will-low,” Will-low genially introduced herself as she walked over.

“I’m Royal God Call—ah—f*ck, Miles! What’re you doing? Let me go!” Royal God Call was about to approach the seated Luo Luo, but he was strong-armed by Gu Fei into leaving. However, an Archer’s Strength was higher than that of a Mage. No matter how much force Gu Fei used, he could not make the struggling Royal God Call to even turn around. In the end, Royal God Call managed to free himself from Gu Fei’s grasp.

“I want your help in researching about Mages,” Gu Fei told Royal God Call.

“Oh? Just ask me if you’ve got anything you don’t understand,” Royal God Call announced loudly; nobody knew who he wanted to hear that.

“Let’s first find a place to fight monsters and study!” Gu Fei suggested.

“Ah...” Royal God Call looked at Gu Fei before looking at the two ladies, as if he was making a truly difficult decision. Finally, he walked toward Will-low and said, “I’m leaving with Miles first. Let’s keep in touch!”

Will-low nodded her head.

Royal God Call followed Gu Fei out of the tavern and quickly asked, “Where did you meet so many beauties?” He began to count with his fingers, “There’s one, two, three... I’ve met three ladies that seem to be pretty chummy with you. Quick, share to me how.”

“We simply know one another. We’re not that ‘chummy’,” Gu Fei said.

“How humble! Miles, you’re really humble,” Royal God Call complimented, continuing, “Tell me how you get to know them, then.”

Gu Fei nodded his head and suddenly threw two gold coins to the ground, shouting, “Hey, ladies!”

The two female players walking in front of them turned around reflexively.

“You dropped your gold coins,” Gu Fei pointed to the ground.

The two ladies looked to the ground and shook their heads, “Those aren’t ours.”

“No way. I saw these gold coins drop from your bodies,” Gu Fei claimed.

“That’s not possible!” The two were dumbfounded. Their gold coins were inside their dimensional pockets, so it was impossible for them to accidentally drop anything.

“Is that so? My mistake, then.” Gu Fei walked forward and picked up the two gold coins.

The two ladies continued to fix their gazes on him, so Gu Fei asked, “Shall I share these with you two?”

The ladies hurriedly shook their heads. Gu Fei then placed the two gold coins back inside his pocket and strutted off. When they were a bit far from the ladies, he said to Royal God Call, “See that? That’s how I get to know the ladies.”

Royal God Call was speechless.

“If you want to get to know the ladies, you should strike up a conversation with them. Speaking with them is considered as getting to know them, right? It’s like asking others ‘What time is it now?’ But you’ll need to invest a little; if those ladies were audacious, they would pocket the gold coins then and there,” Gu Fei taught Royal God Call.

“They’re definitely not audacious, but you’ve looked like a fool,” Royal God Call retorted.

“That’s just an example of how it’s done. I wasn’t after the results. You should try doing it when you get the chance! It’s just basic knowledge,” Gu Fei explained.

“That’s how you usually carry yourself?” Royal God Call asked suspiciously, “Aren’t you a teacher?”

“So what if I’m a teacher? If you, students, can have your puppy loves, why can’t we, the teachers?” Gu Fei countered.

“Teacher... I think you’re not the least bit honest,” Royal God Call muttered.

With that, Gu Fei stopped pulling Royal God Call’s leg. Now that

the two had exited Yunduan City, he seriously asked Royal God Call, “Where’s the best grinding map for Mages?”

“Yunwu Basin. The monsters there are slow and have low magic resistance,” Royal God Call answered.

“How do we get there?” Gu Fei asked.

“This way,” Royal God Call led the way.

After half an hour passed, the two were lost.

“It should be here!” Royal God Call mumbled, as he took out a small booklet.

Gu Fei was startled at the sight of his booklet; the thought of Royal God Call being possessed by Xiaoyu even crossed his mind. He drew closer and took a look. While it was a booklet similar to Xiaoyu’s, the content of it was vastly different. Xiaoyu’s booklet was filled with records of various NPCs and their relevant information, as well as clues regarding quests. Royal God Call’s booklet, on the other hand, was filled with coordinates of NPCs and locations.

“Let me have a look,” Gu Fei took the booklet and flipped over to Yunwu Basin’s coordinates.

Thinking that Yunwu Basin was not just a point but a large piece of land, using just a set of coordinates did not seem logical. Leafing through Royal God Call’s booklet, he saw that Yunwu Basin’s coordinates actually took up two full pages.

“What are these?” Gu Fei’s body shuddered. He had been fooled; Royal God Call’s intelligence was not high at all. Gu Fei thought that he could learn from Royal God Call about the Mage job class. At this rate, would Gu Fei not just degrade himself if he actually learned from him?

“All these coordinates are part of Yunwu Basin! Why couldn’t we find it?” Royal God Call grabbed his booklet back and gripped it tightly, looking all around him.

Gu Fei no longer expected anything from him and sent an inquiry to Brother Assist.

When Brother Assist directed him to the correct way, Gu Fei could not help but complain about his situation with Royal God Call. Brother Assist guffawed, “Don’t place your hopes on him. That guy’s got no sense of direction. If Royal took forever finding his way with simpler coordinates from an MMO, what more with the coordinates from this full-immersion game? Can he even tell his cardinal directions?”

“Royal, where’s east?” Gu Fei asked.

“Over there, I think,” Royal God Call pointed toward the south.

Gu Fei sighed. It was exactly as Brother Assist had said. How would a person who could not even tell the cardinal directions find his way using general coordinates? He took the lead after this, and the two quickly arrived at Yunwu Basin.

Yunwu Basin was indeed the most suitable map for Mages to grind. Mages were running all over the place with packs of monsters trailing after them. The Mage closest to Gu Fei and Royal God Call zigzagged across the field, amassed a lot of monsters after a short distance, and turned around to cast Descending Wheel of Flames. As the leftover monsters closed in on the Mage after his magic bombardment was over, he quickly ran off to attract more monsters.

Gu Fei looked around. Many Mages all over the place ran in ludicrous patterns and shapes, and each was more brazen than the other. However, the most brazen was still the person together with Gu Fei.

Now that Royal God Call no longer had to worry about searching for this place, the bitter expression on his face disappeared. A look of utmost concentration was now on its place as he put a hand beneath his chin, pointing and evaluating each Mage around them. Almost all the Mages in the area received criticism from him, such

as “F*ck! That guy’s an idiot. He’s pulling the monsters so far that half of them have stopped chasing after him”, “That guy’s another idiot! He’s bombarding the monsters when they’re not densely packed yet”, “Holy f*ck! Fireball, Repeating Fireball, and another Fireball! The heck is that grinding method”, “Ha ha ha ha ha! I’ve finally seen all kinds of noobs! That guy’s running too far away that the monsters are outside his casting range”, and so on....

Finally, Royal God Call snapped, “I spit on all of you. None of you are fit to be seen!” He then turned to Gu Fei and asked, “What are you researching about that you need me here? Are you trying to offend my eyes with this spectacle?”

Gu Fei stopped himself from conking Royal God Call and answered, “I want to try weaving spells into my kung fu. I feel that it would make things more interesting.”

“Kung fu? What kung fu?” Royal God Call was at a loss.

“This kung fu!” Gu Fei slashed a clean curve in the air.

“Stop teasing me,” Royal God Call chortled as he slapped Gu Fei’s blade aside, “What kung fu? I think you’ve read too many wuxia novels.”

Gu Fei did not say another word and just sent Sacred Flames of Baptism cleaving toward Royal God Call.

“What are you doing?!” Royal God Call felt terrified by that sudden attack. Even if he knew nothing about Gu Fei’s sword skill, he at least knew of his battle record. Moreover, Archers were notoriously terrible at close combat. He had no doubt what would happen if he and Gu Fei PvPed.

Gu Fei did not reply as he used his Chinese broadsword to chase Royal God Call’s neck.

Royal God Call evaded for quite a while before finally realizing that Gu Fei’s blade would stop short of connecting to his neck by three centimeters. No matter how he moved, Gu Fei’s blade would

follow his neck as if it was an extension of Royal God Call's body. Royal God Call immediately stopped moving, and Gu Fei's blade stopped moving as well, merely three centimeters away from his neck. Royal God Call yelled, "Peak control! That's what Sword Demon mean when he said peak control!"

Gu Fei did not say anything further. He did not know how to communicate properly with this gaming shut-in. It's tiring to explain my kung fu; might as well let him think it's this peak control thingy!

"Uhh... yeah, peak control. How do you reckon I can weave spells into it?" Gu Fei did not hesitate to ask the simpleton.

"That... Are you thinking of incorporating spells into your melee combat?" Royal God Call had an epiphany, "That's too OP! Spells from close range!"

"So what do you think? Interesting, right?" Gu Fei asked.

"That... It's kind of..." Royal God Call felt stunned, "Using spells when you're in melee range... That's something I've never researched about."

"You did not?" Gu Fei was quite disappointed by his revelation.

"Mhm. Death usually comes once a Mage is forced into melee. The closest thing that I've researched about is how to increase my survivability after engaging in close combat. This... This..." Royal God Call trailed off as his expression slowly became trance-like.

"What's the matter?" Gu Fei asked.

Royal God Call was in tears, "Why did I not choose to be a Mage this time?! Why didn't I think of trying such a method to play a Mage?!"

Chapter 99 - Spell Mastery

Royal God Call was currently feeling immense regret.

He used to think that his skill as a Mage had reached the point where he could be considered as peerless. Thinking that being a Mage once more in other MMOs would be unfair to others, he had not chosen the job class in Parallel World. He even ignored the fact that being a Mage in this fully immersive game would be a whole new experience. Afterward, he had somewhat regretted his decision, but his remorse was never as intense as right now.

At present, he was about to help Gu Fei enter an uncharted territory of the Mage job class. A myriad of characteristics, control, and skills of the Mage job class flashed through his mind as he tried to come up with new combat styles for it. Royal God Call's interest for the job class was rekindled, burning stronger and brighter as it formed the word 'melancholy'.

"My role as a Mage is not over yet!" Royal God Call shouted his throat raw.

The Mages who had heard him looked on in confusion, "Why is that Archer shouting about his role as a Mage?"

"Do you have to be so overly dramatic?" Gu Fei felt embarrassed when he heard the Mages' comments in the surrounding area. Just like how others could not understand his fascination with kung fu, he could also not comprehend the players' mentality regarding games. First it was Sword Demon; now, it was Royal God Call.

"Alright! Let's get down to business!" Royal God Call appeared to be more excited than Gu Fei.

Gu Fei nodded his head in agreement.

Royal God Call began to share his hypothesis, "The current level 30 Mage's skill tree has level 0 Fireball, level 6 Ring of Fire, level 12 Spell Mastery, level 18 Twin Incineration, level 24 Descending

Wheel of Flames, and level 30 Repeating Fireball. Spell Mastery is a passive skill, so there's no need to mind it. The other five are offensive spells."

Gu Fei nodded his head. His Midnight Spirit Robe had the 'Spell Mastery +1' trait. Not knowing its purpose, he had tried asking Fleeting Smile about it before. Unfortunately, the latter was busy and could not explain it to him. Later on, he visited the Mage Academy in Yueye City to learn all the available spells he could and somewhat understood Spell Mastery's function after reading its description.

The passive skill, Spell Mastery, had two effects: It increased a character's Spell Aptitude and it boosted Spell Damage by a certain percentage.

This passive skill had its own leveling system. It improved Spell Aptitude and Spell Damage by 6% when a player was at level 1. A player could attain the next level of Spell Mastery if he or she reached the required character level for it. Since Gu Fei learned Spell Mastery at level 31, his passive spell was already at level 3 and added 18% to his Spell Aptitude and Spell Damage.

Gu Fei reckoned that his Midnight Spirit Robe's 'Spell Mastery +1' trait had also increased the level of his passive skill by one, allowing him to deal monstrous magic damage. With Moonlit Nightfalls' high Spell Damage, Gu Fei's Descending Wheel of Flames could insta-kill those Past Deeds' Warriors under the King's Command's buffs despite him having 0 spell proficiency.

Passive skill was not something only Mages had. Thieves had Dagger Mastery, Archers had Bow Mastery, and so on. Each job class had its version of a passive skill depending on its specialization. While every job class had no requisite weapon, each still had its forte.

This was something any average player already knew. Only someone like Gu Fei who had just learned the available spells or

had no understanding of the game mechanics would be clueless about it.

Royal God Call continued explaining, “Ring of Fire is considered as a defensive spell. With how Mages usually try to maintain distance with their opponents in a fight, this spell has little to no value. But if it’s used in close combat, the spell’s worth increases. Although its damage isn’t high, the spell’s effect has a long duration. If you can stick close to an opponent like how you did to me with that sword of yours just now, the spell can perhaps deplete that player’s HP to zero. As for how high the damage you can inflict on your opponent, I’ll need more time to figure that out. What’s your proficiency right now?”

“Zero...” Gu Fei answered sheepishly.

“F*ck!” Royal God Call exclaimed, “You won’t even be able to burn a player to death with such a low proficiency, as it means that the damage your spell deals is low as well. Try to use it more often. There ain’t shortcuts to improving your skills.”

Gu Fei nodded his head in acknowledgement.

“Burning your opponents with this spell without them slaying you first; that’s the hurdle in this,” Royal God Call mulled over this problem.

“Increase Agility for my movement to become nimbler,” Gu Fei answered.

Royal God Call was speechless for a moment. Since the system of other MMOs calculated the players’ evasion rate to determine whether attacks were a hit or a miss, the players just added stat points or equipped certain equipment to solve the issue. In Parallel World, however, evading attacks and skills required the players to perform necessary movements. Whether attacks would be a miss or a hit was entirely dependent on the players’ reaction. Even when the players reacted quickly, sufficient points to Agility were still needed for them to complete their evasive maneuver. This

became one of the uses of stat points. In fact, characters in Parallel World did not have Hit and Evasion stats as – in the words of that disgusting slogan used in the game’s commercial – “the decision lay entirely in the players’ hands.”

While it sounded simple theoretically, it would actually take a long time for players to adjust to this type of gaming environment. By the time the players got the hang of the game, they would have long been expert combatants and skillful weapon wielders.

Of course, these talks were reserved for the later stages of the game. Currently, a majority of the players were still in the adapting-to-everything stage. Gu Fei saying “increase Agility for my movement to become nimbler” was merely empty talk that sounded theoretically plausible for Royal God Call.

Upon seeing Royal God Call’s disdainful eyes, Gu Fei limbered up his body and said, “Here. Let me show you.”

“Eh?”

Gu Fei rushed toward a monster while shouting, “Ring of Fire. Appear!”

Since Ring of Fire was an instant-cast spell, it immediately enveloped Gu Fei’s body once it was casted. The monster cried shrilly as it got exposed to the spell enveloping Gu Fei before collapsing by his feet.

Royal God Call paled visibly, “Your Spell Damage is very high... Just this defensive spell insta-killed your enemy! What’s going on? Didn’t you say your proficiency at it is zero? How did you deal such a high damage, then?”

Gu Fei handed Moonlit Nightfalls to Royal God Call for inspection.

Royal God Call took the sword, nonplussed. Upon seeing its traits, he had the sudden urge to log off and never interact with Gu Fei ever again. He shrieked, “Where did you get this?!”

“It’s a chain quest reward,” Gu Fei calmly answered.

“Chain quest reward? Are these rewards so OP by nature? No wonder your Spell Damage is monstrously high. The heck! This weapon’s Physical Damage is very high as well. I’ll get insta-killed if this sword is plunged into my chest. This... This...” Royal God Call was at a loss for words.

“I don’t think you’ll get insta-killed. My Sword Aptitude isn’t high enough,” Gu Fei refuted.

“Aptitude... What’s that?” Royal God Call asked.

“Oh, it’s like this!” Gu Fei regurgitated Fleeting Smile’s explanation to him. He was worried at first that his explanation was not clear enough. But who was Royal God Call? He was of course a gaming expert. Naturally, his understanding of online games was comparable to Gu Fei’s understanding of kung fu. After listening to Gu Fei’s explanation, Royal God Call immediately got what he meant, repeatedly crying out, “I see!”

Although Royal God Call was a gaming expert, no current equipment, besides Gu Fei’s, had Aptitude requirement in Parallel World. And despite the Bow Mastery skill having Bow Aptitude +18%, there was no explanation detailing what it was for. Researching about its usage was impossible as well, since information concerning this trait had yet to be released in public.

“Based on your explanation, any equipment with Aptitude requirement is considered as high grade,” Royal God Call gazed intently at Gu Fei’s sword, “If we estimate using the Spell Damage of the general magic staves right now, this sword should be a level 50 to 60 weapon. This means that a level 50 to 60 character with the correct stat point allocation can attain its Aptitude requirement. Otherwise, this Aptitude design will be meaningless.”

“What’re you insinuating?” Gu Fei asked.

“That having adequate Spell Aptitude that will allow you to unleash this sword’s full potential with your current level 30 and full-Agility build is impossible. But if that’s the case, why is your spell proficiency able to deal immense damage? What’s going on here? Where did that Spell Aptitude come from?” Royal God Call wondered.

“Spell Mastery at level 3; that’s only 18%. I have a robe that grants me Spell Mastery +1, bringing the passive skill up to 24%. Plus, Mages have innate Aptitude toward spells,” Gu Fei explained.

“This sword has a Spell Aptitude requirement of 170%... The innate Aptitude bonus from the Mage job class won’t be sufficient for you to unleash this level 50 or higher weapon’s full potential. The stat that affects Spell Aptitude most likely is Intelligence, even if we consider Spirit. My point is that it won’t depend on Agility. Since you only added points to Agility, how much Spell Aptitude can you have with the default stat boost of 30 points for Intelligence and Spirit at level 30? It’s absolutely impossible!” Royal God Call calculated aloud. Suddenly, he thought of something, “Wait a minute. Did you just say your robe has ‘Spell Mastery +1’ trait? What robe is that?”

Gu Fei took off Midnight Spirit Robe and handed it over to Royal God Call for inspection as well.

“F*ck me. Where did you get this? This robe must be at level 60 or 70!” Royal God Call was stunned once more.

“It’s also a chain quest reward.”

“A robe that adds 20 points to Intelligence... isn’t enough still. Spell Mastery +1... By the looks of things, this ‘+1’ doesn’t increase your Spell Mastery passive skill by one level,” Royal God Call said.

“What does it do, then?”

“Uhhh... Aptitude is displayed as percentage. Does this ‘+1’ actually mean ‘+100%’? If that’s the case, then this robe adds 100%

to your Spell Aptitude, achieving your sword's Spell Aptitude requirement. With that, it's possible for you to wield this weapon to its full potential," Royal God Call's eyes brimmed with excitement, his expression probably resembling Christopher Columbus' when he had found the New World.

"Quick! Try it out!" Royal God Call held Midnight Spirit Robe and returned Moonlit Nightfalls to Gu Fei. He pointed toward a monster and said, "GO!"

Gu Fei followed his orders. He flicked out Moonlit Nightfalls as he rushed toward the indicated monster with his bare torso, instantly casting Ring of Fire.

It was exactly like what Royal God Call had deduced; the monster screamed as it got scorched by the spinning Ring of Fire, but it did not fall down this time. Clearly, Gu Fei's Spell Damage had dropped by a huge margin.

"Wa ha ha ha ha! I'm indeed a first-rate expert among Mages. Actually solving the mystery of your Spell Damage so quickly," Royal God Call cackled arrogantly.

The surrounding players observed the rare animal before them once more, This Archer is calling himself a Mage? What a lunatic!

Chapter 100 - Peddlers' Street

Royal God Call was quite pleased with himself for finding out how Gu Fei was able to unleash the full potential of Moonlit Nightfalls' Spell Damage. Feeling satisfied with what he deemed as a great accomplishment, he spiritedly continued explaining to Gu Fei about the Mage job class.

Royal God Call rattled off to Gu Fei all the combat techniques of the job class based on his past online gaming experiences as a Mage. Although each online game was distinct, the Mage job class' general design was more or less the same. The specialty of a Mage, besides the difference in the skills available, had always been unchanging. Therefore, there would still be advantages if Gu Fei applied Royal God Call's techniques into the spells in Parallel World.

The current spells available in Parallel World were largely similar to the ones found in other MMOs. As a result, many players' research of the spells in this VR game had hugely been guided by their past gaming experiences.

Royal God Call listed out all the spells' characteristics in large chunks, unmindful of Gu Fei's ability to remember them all. Fortunately, Gu Fei was interested in what Royal God Call was saying, as the methods and tips sounded to him like a new form of kung fu, so he raptly listened to the latter. However, when Royal God Call explained how the spells were executed in other MMOs – tapping on a keyboard and moving a mouse – Gu Fei zoned him out.

In Parallel World, everything – observation, physical movements, timing of unleashing skills and spells, et cetera – depended entirely on the players. This largely differed to other MMOs. This large difference became apparent to the two when Gu Fei tested the theories mentioned by Royal God Call to some monsters in Yunwu Basin, giving the two a bit of a shock.

Gu Fei was like a sponge the way he easily absorbed all the new information given to him. But while his flawless execution of the requested moves, steps, and attacks was enough to shock Royal God Call, what truly made the latter surprise was how the techniques always ended up failing. Maybe it should not be considered as ‘failing’, but that they ‘did not achieve’ the results expected by Royal God Call upon being performed in Parallel World.

Royal God Call forgot to consider something important: Players no longer had the panoptic view of their surroundings in Parallel World unlike in other MMOs. Meaning, they could no longer see everything around them.

“Seems like we’ll need to do major adjustment to these techniques,” Royal God Call muttered, asking, “You can’t see what’s behind your back, right?” But before Gu Fei could answer him, Royal God Call already voiced his discontent, “D*mn. This is really troublesome! I need to experience some things for myself to have a better grasp of them, but now—f*ck! To hell with the Archer job class!” He then proceeded to toss his bow to the ground.

“It’s alright. Just tell me all those techniques and I’ll try to adjust them myself,” Gu Fei said. In truth, he was more skillful than Royal God Call in executing those techniques because of his real-life combat experiences. He just did not wish to hurt Royal God Call’s pride by pointing this out, especially after the latter had just declared himself as the ‘number one’ Mage.

Royal God Call not choosing to be a Mage in Parallel World might be a good thing, as this fully immersive game had practically rendered all the experienced players’ past gaming techniques with their keyboards and mice obsolete. A majority of the players in fact had to research every fighting technique anew with this VRMMO setting as the fulcrum. In this aspect, a gaming noob like Gu Fei who possessed great physical prowess had actually become the more skilled expert in Parallel World.

There were two types of physicists: theoretical and experimental. Likewise, there were two types of players in Parallel World.

The individual differences in terms of ability and potential of the players playing Parallel World gave birth to these two types. Those who could understand and speculate the VR game's mechanics but never apply them real-time were categorized as theoretical players, with Brother Assist being the most extreme among them. Given their inability to apply their gaming knowledge in Parallel World, Sword Demon and the rest could also be considered as theoretical players despite being top experts in other online games. As for Gu Fei, he could be categorized as an experimental player – a top level experimental player.

Right now, Gu Fei and Royal God Call had this sort of symbiotic relationship. One provided theories and the other experimented with them. In Parallel World, experimenting was a lot harder than theorizing. So while Royal God Call was easily identifying the failed theories executed by Gu Fei, Gu Fei was painstakingly testing all the theories mentioned by Royal God Call.

After some time, the two left the grinding map and returned to Yunduan City. Royal God Call brought Gu Fei to a crowded, wide street. Players were flanking both sides of it with various items, such as job classes' equipment and crafting materials, on display on the mats in front of them.

“To think that there's such a place in this city!” Gu Fei exclaimed in surprise. Although he had seen some players occasionally setting up stalls on the ground everywhere, he had never thought that there was a street specially intended for peddling goods and hawking wares in Yunduan City. All the in-game cities were large and Gu Fei only went to places he knew, so he would naturally not be familiar with all the areas in this city.

“Why don't they sell their stuff in the Auction House?” Gu Fei asked Royal God Call.

“The system charges a fee when using the Auction House. The cost one incurs is dependent on the bid price set and the number of days it is listed. So if a player places an item and no one buys it, he or she will just end up steadily losing money,” Royal God Call explained.

“I see!” Gu Fei nodded his head in understanding.

Royal God Call eyed him, “I’ve always suspected that you’re a noob. Now, I’ve confirmed it!”

Gu Fei laughed, unperturbed. Not only was he a noob when it came to playing a game, he was an extremely unmotivated noob as well. He had been playing Parallel World for quite some time now, yet his knowledge about it was still rudimentary.

Royal God Call finally stopped in front of a rather large stall. The items on display in this stall were more exquisite and of greater variety than the ones set up by others. Gu Fei glanced at the stall owner and was momentarily stunned. The person before him was like an Adonis in white robe that had just stepped out of a portrait. He was clearly a NPC given the professional smile decorating his face.

Royal God Call bought a large quantity of booklets and quills from him. Gu Fei could not help but sigh upon learning where the in-game booklets and quills came from. Knowing what Royal God Call would need these things for, Gu Fei was thoroughly impressed. Just recording all his profound gaming knowledge about the Mage job class would require so many of these newly bought booklets. I wonder how many kung fu manuals can be made from all these booklets... Gu Fei calculated in his mind.

“Are you going to write down all the techniques and tricks you know in these booklets?” Gu Fei asked.

Royal God Call affirmed, “I doubt you’ll remember everything if I verbally pass them on to you.”

Gu Fei nodded his head in acknowledgement, “Sorry to trouble you, then.”

Royal God Call’s eyes suddenly shone brightly, “Hey... Do you think my techniques can be sold for coins?”

“Does the game have a movable printing skill?” Gu Fei riposted.

Royal God Call’s eyes immediately lost their sparkle. These techniques that were fast becoming obsolete in Parallel World could not even be put to good use in their final moments.

Gu Fei patted his back sympathetically, “Let me summarize everything. Then we can start classes and collect school fees from those. When the time comes, you can have half the profit.”

“Will that work?” Royal God Call asked, interested.

“That’s my career,” Gu Fei smiled.

“It’s settled, then! I’ll go and start writing your teaching materials!” Royal God Call shook the stack of booklets in his hands.

“I’ll walk around and take a look. Check out our source of students,” Gu Fei said.

“F*ck!” Royal God Call cursed, before leaving the Peddlers’ Street.

As Gu Fei continued to window-shop along the street, he found everything he lay eyes on a novelty. Seeing the haggling of the players around him, he felt as if he had been transported to a flea market in reality; the only difference between the two was that the air around here was a lot cleaner.

“Violent Fei!” Gu Fei suddenly heard someone calling him while he was strolling along the street. He already knew who the person was with such a distinctive way of greeting him. Turning his head to look at the person, he saw that Xi Xiaotian was dressed in a thief cape. She was furtively squatting by the corner of a wall; her face was covered and a dilapidated stall was in front of her.

Gu Fei vigilantly looked all around him, only cautiously approaching her after he had ascertained that there was no trap or ambush laid for him.

“What’re you doing here?” Gu Fei asked, suspicious that she was currently doing some sort of shady business.

“I’m selling things!” Xi Xiaotian nudged the small stall before her.

Gu Fei inspected the items briefly and saw that they were a hodge-podge of crappy baubles and trinkets. He did not even need to appraise them to know that they were all cheap objects. The top-grade equipment, especially weapons, in Parallel World could clearly be distinguished with eyes alone. Top-grade weapons usually had aura or energy field enclosing them. Gu Fei’s Moonlit Nightfalls, Sword Demon’s Frost Memories, and Silver Moon’s King’s Blade were examples of top-grade weapons. Royal God Call did not consider his weapon as top grade precisely because it did not have any aura.

“Since we know each other so well, why don’t you tell me what you’re really doing here?” Gu Fei asked Xi Xiaotian, as he squatted next to her.

“I’m just selling my items. Really,” Xi Xiaotian insisted as she adjusted the shawl covering her face.

“Do you have to conceal your face when you’re selling things?” Gu Fei asked.

“It’s because I’m trying to maintain a low profile!” Xi Xiaotian replied defensively.

“Is that so?” Gu Fei was sure that there was a reason behind this. He got up and looked around him to see if he could find any angry customer looking for her. This lady could also be trying to make him her scapegoat once more. In the end, he found no one like that, as everywhere around him remained peaceful.

At this moment, a player approached the stall, showing an item to her, “Sis Xiaotian, how much do you think this item should cost?”

Xi Xiaotian glanced at it, “12 gold coins. It’ll be marketable if you sell it at the price of 10 gold coins.”

“If I’m looking to cheat a noob?” the person asked while displaying a conniving smile.

“This item won’t fool any noob, since he or she will consider it as garbage,” Xi Xiaotian explained.

The person sighed and walked away.

“A syndicate of hustlers?” Gu Fei asked Xi Xiaotian.

Xi Xiaotian rolled her eyes and was about to say something when another person approached her, “Help me see how much this item’s worth.”

Xi Xiaotian gave it a glance and then shook her head, “Your level’s too high. My Appraisal skill didn’t work.”

Upon hearing this, the newcomer tried to pass the item over to Xi Xiaotian so that she could inspect the traits of the item, but Gu Fei quickly stopped him.

“What’re you doing?” The newcomer thought that Gu Fei was trying to rob him, so he hurriedly stuffed the item back inside his dimensional pocket.

“Giving your things so easily to people? Beware of not getting them back,” Gu Fei kindly gave his advice.

The newcomer was dumbfounded, “What a joke.” With that, he took the item out once more and passed it over to Xi Xiaotian while carefully guarding against Gu Fei.

Gu Fei stuffed his hand inside his dimensional pocket, ready to bring out his sword if the need arose.

Xi Xiaotian took the item and looked at it carefully, “20 gold

coins.” She then returned it to the person.

“Thank you!” The person took the item back. Throwing a glance at Gu Fei, the person walked off and muttered to himself, “What a lunatic!”

Gu Fei felt extremely aggrieved. Once again, he squatted next to Xi Xiaotian, “What? Is that 20-gold-coin item not tempting enough for you?”

“Clever!” Xi Xiaotian said, “Looks like you’ve got quite the talent.”

Gu Fei rolled his eyes in response. Xi Xiaotian’s hands were now on Gu Fei’s body.

“What’re you doing?!” Gu Fei exclaimed in shock. Was this swindler now lusting after his body besides his money?

“Your robe is pretty good!” Xi Xiaotian had her hands on Gu Fei’s robe, rubbing it with all her ten fingers, “This material; it’s not something found in the current equipment. Where did you get this?”

“Oh, is that so? How much do you think it’s worth?” Gu Fei asked, somewhat amused.

“I can’t see its traits,” Xi Xiaotian continued inspecting it, saying, “Take it off and let me have a look.”

After waiting for quite a while and hearing no response, her gaze left the robe and went up to Gu Fei’s face. He was staring at her with a placid smile. Xi Xiaotian instantly returned that smile of his with her own, “I know you won’t have the guts.”

“Reverse psychology won’t work on me,” Gu Fei remarked.

“I’m really not trying to cheat you. I haven’t seen any textile like this before; it must be a top-grade item. Let me have a good look at it,” Xi Xiaotian pleaded.

“What else is there to see? I don’t wanna risk it with that

fascinated look on your face,” Gu Fei absolutely did not trust her.

“If you’re not gonna believe me, then forget about it,” Xi Xiaotian pouted.

“Wait a minute. I’ll let you have a look at this one. Tell me how much it’s worth,” Gu Fei took out his sword, Moonlit Nightfalls, intentionally. Weapons were always the equipment worth the most. Considering how the grade of Moonlit Nightfalls was higher than that of his Midnight Spirit Robe, Gu Fei felt that it would be entertaining to watch this swindler’s reaction upon seeing something that she could not have.

The black aura emitted by Moonlit Nightfalls made all the difference. Quite a lot of players around Gu Fei found themselves drawn by its sinister radiance once he took it out. None of the players had seen such a top-grade item before in Peddlers’ Street. Bluntly speaking, this street was a place where the average players would do their purchases or exchange for much-needed items. Top-grade equipment was currently only purchasable by pay-to-win players, gaming workshops, or clan guilds and similar organizations. This essentially meant that such items were sold at high prices beyond the average players’ financial capacity and could only be found in the Auction House or a Trade Exchange platform. No one would absolutely bring them here at the Peddlers’ Street for the commoners to buy – except for this one before them, apparently.

Once Gu Fei took out his sword, quite a number of players’ eyes shone brightly and a variety of gazes fell on him. No one knew Gu Fei’s real objective of trying to tease Xi Xiaotian, and most of them only thought that they had finally met a once-in-a-hundred-year, once-in-a-blue-moon noob who treated a top-grade weapon as common goods, selling it for a low price.

This was a chance that should not to be missed as it only ever happened once. Quite a lot of people tossed aside the items that they had been inspecting and began to make their way toward Gu

Fei. Some perceived the same intention in the others and threw them warning glares.

Plenty of people had such intention, so a crowd soon gathered around Xi Xiaotian's stall. The experienced players, who saw the situation unfolding, quietly mumbled, "Oh, dear."

Cheating the noob out of his top-grade equipment was considered as a source of learning as well. One rule that every expert swindler followed was to never show eagerness when dealing with his or her intended victim. Otherwise, the would-be victim might wise up regarding the swindler's real intention. Although the noob before them was unfamiliar with the online gaming world, he was definitely not an idiot. He could easily realize the value of his top-grade equipment if they acted overly eager.

While none had yet to begin his or her 'performance', the crowd had already gathered near Gu Fei like a pack of hungry wolves. Everyone eyed one another. They were warning one another to tread lightly when dealing with this noob; otherwise, the noob would realize that his item was a cut above the rest.

The situation right now was beyond saving, however. After all, everyone here wanted to obtain the top-grade item in the noob's hand. Peacefully letting anyone pull the noob to one side and discuss the trade was impossible. The initiative could only be seized by force this time.

Just as this thought crossed their minds, many people rushed toward Gu Fei. Nobody wished to lag behind, so a semi stampede immediately broke out. Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian were still squatting together when they noticed the light before them getting obstructed. They turned their heads to take a look at what was blocking the light, only to realize that they had been surrounded.

Gu Fei was someone who attained the highest PK value in Parallel World, and Xi Xiaotian was a professional con-artist who considered swindling as a hobby.

The two were obviously the sort that people would bear intense hatred against. Seeing that they had been surrounded, the two reacted accordingly to the situation. And yet, they were momentarily at a loss regarding this large bulk of people's intention. The two could feel their hearts sinking as they thought that their enemies had finally come to confront them.

Gu Fei gripped the sword in his hand firmly; Xi Xiaotian's fingers squeezed Gu Fei's robe tightly.

This encirclement is a little tight; it'll be hard to break out of it, Gu Fei quietly lamented to himself. It was too bad that his casting speed was slow; Descending Wheel of Flames would not reach in time before he got shredded by this mob before him. This is retribution! Gu Fei felt remorseful inside. Because of his desire to tease Xi Xiaotian with his top-grade weapon, he had failed to take note of his immediate surroundings. Let's just play this by the nose. If the enemies don't make a move, I won't either, just as he decided on this in his mind, one of the enemies made a move.

A man with a friendly smile on his face extended his hand, "Brother, how much are you planning to sell your sword?"

Gu Fei and Xi Xiaotian were stunned. They each breathed a sigh of relief. While Gu Fei only knew that the person before him had no ill intention, Xi Xiaotian understood what was really happening at Peddlers' Street right now. She instantly grasped that this bunch of people had a different sort of ill will toward Gu Fei.

"I'm not selling the sword," Gu Fei said, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

"Bro, I'll give you a high price for it," someone said.

"Oh? How much?" Gu Fei's interest was piqued.

The person suddenly deepened his voice. As if making a hard decision, he gritted his teeth and declared, "I'll pay you 20 gold coins."

Gu Fei was startled. Even if he neither understood the economic market nor knew the situation, he could at least tell that Moonlit Nightfalls was not just worth these measly 20 gold coins. This amount might be a large sum to an average player, but it was not worth much in the game. A mere glass of the most expensive liquor in a tavern was already worth 20 gold coins, so how was it possible for a top-grade sword to share the same price?

The other players showed a look of disdain toward the man who had offered 20 gold coins for the sword. Just the fact that a sizeable crowd had surrounded the noob, he would naturally be able to tell that the sword in his hand was worth more than 20 gold coins. But when they saw that Gu Fei was rooted to the spot, as if he was hesitating on something, their hearts trembled.

Could this once-in-a-hundred-year, once-in-a-blue-moon noob have no idea about anything in this game? Maybe he's an inborn fool!

The crowd was boiling.

"20 gold coins? Aren't you being too much of a cheapskate? Bro, I'll pay you 21 gold coins!"

"21 gold coins? Just that one extra gold coin? That's stingy as heck. I'll give you 23 gold coins!"

"25!"

"30!"

"Look at you guys with only that bit of aspiration; 50 gold coins!" someone said as he thumped his chest.

In Peddlers' Street, 50 gold coins was considered as a huge sum. Some players left dejectedly upon hearing that amount being offered. Seeing that a top-grade weapon was currently being held by an idiotic noob, the surrounding players collectively thought, I won't make a loss if I take it to a Trade Exchange platform! In fact, I can probably turn it into a tidy sum.

With such a thought, all did not even bother to check how many gold coins they actually had in their money pouches and just vehemently called out higher and higher bids.

50, 55, 60, 80, 100....

In the blink of an eye, the price had already risen to 500!

The top-grade equipment in Parallel World was going for thousands in the Trade Exchange right now. The transaction would still be very profitable for one of these bidders if Gu Fei sold the sword at 500 gold coins.

In the process of bidding for the item, the bidders came to a realization.

The noob's sword indeed had denser aura, which was the trademark of top-grade equipment, but its traits were still unknown. The crowd had a lot of Appraisal experts, yet none had been able to appraise the sword's traits.

Would an idiotic noob level up his Appraisal skill to such a high level? In other words, was it possible for this idiotic noob to actually be at a higher level than everyone present? Could he actually be at level 31?

They suddenly realized that the noob might not be so simple, despite him showing such a dull expression when all had called out bids.

The bidding stopped as suddenly as it started. All coincidentally shut their mouths at the same time, realizing that the current situation was not what they had expected. They wanted to see what sort of reaction their target would make if the bidding stopped.

“Bro, 500 gold coins is already the upper limit in terms of price. I believe no one else will be willing to put out a higher price than this,” someone from within the crowd said, looking all around him with squinted eyes.

The others knew what that person was thinking, so they cooperated by keeping their mouths shut, awaiting Gu Fei's reaction.

Gu Fei was about to speak when Xi Xiaotian, who was beside him, winked at him.

“See? There's actually a ton of swindlers in this world,” Xi Xiaotian remarked.

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